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The Council for Education Policy, Research and Improvement (CEPRI) serves as a citizen board for independent policy research and analysis and is composed of five members appointed by the Governor, two members appointed by the Speaker of the House, and two members appointed by the President of the Senate.



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Research and Improvement

**PROPOSED  
CONSTITUTIONAL  
AMENDMENT:**

**CLASS SIZE  
REDUCTION**

**An Impact Analysis**

**July 2002**

**The approval of this amendment would lead to a policy that has prohibitive costs (currently estimated as high as \$27.5 billion) and places unrealistic demands on finding qualified teachers to fill additional job vacancies. Though conventional wisdom may state that smaller classes benefit students and lead to higher levels of achievement, a definitive connection between class size reduction and student achievement has not been made.**

**PROPOSED AMENDMENT**

**Ballot Summary**

*“Proposes an amendment to the State Constitution to require that the Legislature provide funding for sufficient classrooms so that there be a maximum number of students in public school classes for various grade levels; requires compliance by the beginning of the 2010 school year; requires the Legislature, and not local school districts, to pay for the costs associated with reduced class size; prescribes a schedule for phased-in funding to achieve the required maximum class size.”*

**Explanation of  
Amendment**

The proposed amendment sets the maximum number of students assigned to each teacher teaching in public school classrooms to 18 students in pre-kindergarten to third grade; 22 students in grades four

through eight; and 25 students in grades nine through twelve. Beginning with the 2003-2004 fiscal year, it calls for the Legislature to provide sufficient funds to reduce the average number of students in each classroom by at least two students per year until the above limits are reached. In addition, the proposed amendment exempts extracurricular classes from these class size requirements.

**CURRENT STATUS**

In Florida, it is currently within the authority of the local school districts to determine class size and student-to-teacher ratios for each classroom in their respective districts. As of the 2000-01 school year, average class sizes in Florida public schools ranged from 23.3 students per classroom in kindergarten through fifth grade to 27.8 students per classroom in a high school social studies class. Among the fifty states, Florida ranks 43<sup>rd</sup> in student-to-teacher ratio in public elementary and secondary schools.

Statewide, Florida’s kindergarten through third grade classrooms are overwhelmingly above the amendment’s proposed limit of 18 students. For the 2001 school year, over 80% of kindergarten through third grade classrooms were above the proposed limit of 18 students or fewer. In some of Florida’s largest counties the percentage of classrooms at or below the 18-student threshold is even smaller than the statewide average. For example, in

Miami-Dade county only 4.4% of kindergarten classrooms contain 18 students or fewer, well below the statewide percentage.

## IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT

Conforming to the proposed class size limits would be a daunting task for Florida to undertake. With the majority of Florida classrooms over the class size limits proposed, a significant number of personnel, resources and new facilities would be needed in order to satisfy the amendment's proposed limits.

In compliance with Florida law, the Revenue Estimating Conference assessed the fiscal impact of this proposed constitutional amendment. The conference produced the following estimates:

- ∞ Depending on how classrooms are built, the total cumulative operating and capital outlay costs over the implementation period of this amendment are estimated to be as high as **\$27.5 billion**.

This estimate assumes that the additional classroom needs would be met by a combination of permanent and portable classrooms at the current average rate (88% permanent, 12% portable). Any lower estimate assumes a change from the current building practice, which may underestimate the impact of this amendment.

An independent analysis by CEPRI produced estimates that are similar to those agreed upon by the Revenue Estimating Conference (**\$29.1 billion**). The estimates produced by CEPRI help validate the numbers agreed upon by the Conference, and provide an indication that the cost of class size reduction may actually be higher than the official estimates.

- ∞ **The estimated cost of \$27.5 billion for class size reduction is over double the amount of money that the lottery has provided to education since its inception in 1987 (\$11.1 billion).**

The Legislature would have to determine the revenue source to fund this amendment. Possible sources of revenue would include:

### ∞ Sales Tax Increase

If class size reduction is solely funded through an increase in sales and use tax, the sales would **increase by about 20% over the current rate (rising from 6 cents to 7.4 cents on the dollar)**.

### ∞ Corporate Income Tax Increase

If class size reduction is solely funded through an increase in corporate income and excise tax, the tax would **nearly quadruple over the current rate (increasing from 5.5% to 20.5%)**.

### ∞ Elimination or Reduction of Other Government Services

If taxes are not increased, the cost of class size reduction would have to be funded by reducing or eliminating current governmental services. Over the 8-year implementation period, the average annual cost of class size reduction will be \$3.4 billion, which would equal:

- \* **The state share of the entire Medicaid budget (\$3.5 billion); or**
- \* **More than the total state funding for the Departments of Children and Families (\$1.9 billion); Elder Affairs (\$134.4 million); Health (\$510.2 million); and Veteran's Affairs (\$7.7 million).**

To compound the impact, the loss of state funding in the examples above would lead to a corresponding loss of federal matching funds. For example, as much as **\$7.2 billion** in federal Medicaid funding would be lost.

In order to pay for the costs associated with class size reduction, the citizens of Florida must make certain trade-offs. The examples above serve to illustrate just a few of the possible choices Floridians may face if class size reduction passes.

In addition to the costs involved, the passage of this amendment would place unrealistic demands on finding qualified teachers and other person-

nel to fill the additional job vacancies created by class size reduction.

- ∞ An estimated **31,800 additional teachers** and **30,200 additional classrooms** would be needed to accommodate the class size limits proposed by this amendment over the period of implementation (2003-2010).

Though the number of students would be unaffected by the class size reductions, additional non-teaching personnel would be needed. For example, additional principals would be needed to supervise the additional teachers. Additional clerical workers would be needed to assist the additional administrators. Additional custodians would be needed to handle the additional classrooms. Though at first glance it may appear that adjustments in class size would only effect the need for additional teachers, it would actually set off a chain reaction, leading to a need for additional personnel at all levels.

- ∞ There has not been made a definitive connection between class size and student achievement.

Positive findings regarding any connection between class size and student achievement may be overstated and the product of questionable research designs.

For more information regarding this research, a full report on this amendment is available on CEPRI's website:

<http://www.cepri.state.fl.us>