



## **TaxWatch Calls For Fair and Deliberative Tax Overhaul Debate**

***Reform Need Not Be Hasty or One-Dimensional***

**TALLAHASSEE** – Florida TaxWatch and the Center for a Competitive Florida today opposed the recently passed legislation creating a November 2002 constitutional amendment calling for a statewide tax overhaul.

“Using Florida's Constitution as the vehicle for major tax reforms simply wrong and ties the hands of future legislators,” said Dominic M. Calabro, President, Florida TaxWatch.

If voters approve the tax overhaul amendment, a 12-member Joint Legislative Committee will review all exclusions from the tax on sales, use and other transactions. A majority of the committee can elect to repeal an exemption, submit its findings and recommendations to the Legislature in the required time frame, leaving lawmakers to choose the exemptions destiny.

According to Calabro, there are simply too many problems with the amendment voters must take action. Among the primary concerns of Calabro and members of Florida TaxWatch:

- The summary ballot language is troublesome and does not accurately or clearly instruct Florida voters. It likely will face constitutional challenges.
- Proper checks and balances are missing; the Governor would have no authority in the matter – and voters are not advised of that fact through the ballot language.
- Stringing out the exemption deauthorization process over multiple years invites mischief in the proceedings and places the state's economy and business climate in limbo.

As promised earlier this year, Florida TaxWatch is commissioning an independent review and comprehensive analysis of Florida's tax system by its Center for a Competitive Florida. The group will meet four to five times – with their first meeting starting in June.

“Any responsible and nurturing modernization of Florida's tax system requires a nonpartisan, independent assessment,” said Calabro. “The Center for a Competitive Florida will determine through fact-based research – not innuendo -- how Florida and its citizens will fair once modernized over the long haul.”

A Florida TaxWatch Special Report released today provides an analysis of the reform plan passed in the final days of the legislative session.

“Florida needs a tax system that is fair and understandable, one that will promote tax compliance, be inexpensive to operate, and foster a healthy, strong and diversified economy for all Floridians,” Calabro said. “Absent such a system, Florida will be unable to effectively compete for and retain the high-value jobs Florida residents, businesses and the recipients of government services deserve.”

The full report is available online at [www.floridataxwatch.org](http://www.floridataxwatch.org).