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THOSE WITH NOTHING TO HIDE HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR

By PETER C. DOHERTY

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Recently the supporters of petition drives to replace two amendments to Florida's Constitution on the November ballot filed suit hoping to stop the operation of a new Florida law. The law requires any such amendments to be accompanied by a statement of how much the adoption of the amendment would cost taxpayers. The new law was passed by the 2002 Legislature after it received complaints from voters who said that they probably would not have voted for the so-called "bullet train" amendment in 2000 if they had known how much it was likely to cost.

The problem with a fiscal statement, say the people who have filed the lawsuit, is not that telling people how much their amendments will cost is a bad idea. Their contention is that to require one now is unfair since any amendment already certified for the ballot is exempt from the requirement.

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If you want proof I am right about this, here is the proof.

One of the amendments referred to above would mandate that the state set up a universal pre-K program to help kids become ready for school. The other would mandate the state fund a program that would result in smaller class sizes for all grades K-12. Sound good, don't they? Well read on, because here is what they don't want you to know:

In the first year, the pre-K amendment could cost in the neighborhood of \$500 million, while the class size amendment could cost \$12 billion or more per year.

Now, be truthful. Do these ideas sound as good once you know the price tag? Of course not—and that is why they don't want you to know.

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