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- *The Journal*
- Policy Briefs
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- Invitations to local and statewide JMI events.

The James Madison Institute is a Florida-based research and educational organization engaged in the battle of ideas. The Institute's ideas are rooted in a belief in the U.S. Constitution and such timeless ideals as limited government, economic freedom, federalism, and individual liberty coupled with individual responsibility. For more information about The James Madison Institute and its publications please visit [www.jamesmadison.org](http://www.jamesmadison.org).

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## Got Liberty?

### Sign Up Today

[www.jamesmadison.org](http://www.jamesmadison.org)

Your membership in The James Madison Institute will help limit government and create a better future for Florida, as we work towards free-market solutions.

Members annually receive four issues of *The Journal of The James Madison Institute*, as well as other Institute publications, policy studies, reports, and notices of local and statewide events.



# THE JAMES MADISON INSTITUTE

## Florida's Tea Party Fundamentals

Tips Floridians can use to gain government transparency, restore Constitutional law, and re-establish limited government.



### Not Theirs to Give

James Madison, the father of the United States Constitution, is attributed with saying, "I cannot undertake to lay my finger on that article of the Constitution which granted a right to Congress of expending, on the objects of benevolence, the money of their constituents."

Did the U.S. Constitution miraculously change to where perceived legislative benevolence is now allowed at the taxpayers expense? To ask the question is to answer. Nothing has changed, except the citizenry has sat idly by as their legislatures co-opted the very document that is supposed to protect against such abuses.

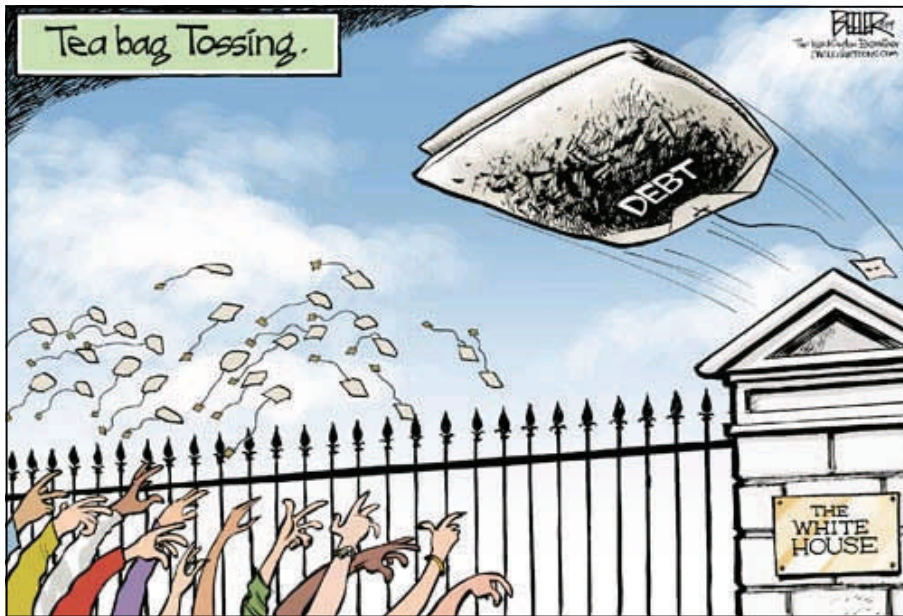
The taxpayers' money is not the legislatures to give. So what can a concerned citizen do to help keep the government in check? You can use the following tips as a place to start.

### 1. Demand transparency in government.

Floridians have done a great job at insisting on transparency of government expenses at the state level. Just this year Governor Charlie Crist and Chief Financial Officer Alex Sink created "Florida's Checkbook\*," a website that allows citizens to view state expenditures on contractors, state and local government collections and expenditures, and reports on the state economy.

Why stop there? Let's take the recent success at the state level and begin pressing for more transparency at the national and local level as well. Transparency shines light into government budgets to find the wasteful spending. So what's the downside? Some bureaucrat's irresponsibility finally revealed?

\* *Florida's Checkbook website:*  
<http://www.myfloridacfo.com/transparency/>



## 2. Government waste is a bi-partisan effort!

Lets be honest. The past decade has not been friendly to citizens concerned about the growing national debt in Washington D.C., or misuse of funds at the local and state level in Florida.

*Example:* In 2001 when President Bush took office the national debt was about \$5.7 trillion (with a T). When he left, the debt was about \$10 trillion. President Obama is now only trying to keep up percentage wise.

True patriots will see each political party's record for what it is, wasteful, and stop making excuses for this or that reason. To

mount a principled stand against government waste, Floridians must vote based on the individual politician's record of fiscally responsible or wasteful spending, regardless of party affiliation.

## 3. The voting record matters. Do your elected officials' votes reflect constituent sentiment?

Our elected officials are voted into office with the hope that they will accurately represent their constituents. With the position comes the obligation to be open, honest, and forthright. Should your elected officials' promises veer off course during their term, vote them out of office the next election cycle.

## 4. Stay Informed and Take Action

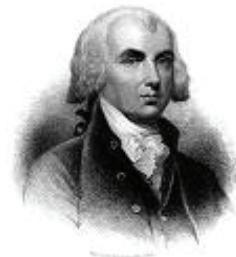
Speak up, write letters to the editor of a local newspaper, attend campaign events, town hall forums, city council and county commission meetings, and ask questions. Show your elected officials they have to *earn* your vote. Why should you expect their demeanor to change for the better after the first or second term? Hold them accountable. It's the only way to get real change.

Contact your local, state, and national representatives and senators before they vote on a bill. Express your views so they know their constituents support a constitutional, free-market, limited government agenda, and will not compromise for anything less.

## 5. Use Available Resources

Educational resources and organizational information are available for you at:

[www.jamesmadison.org](http://www.jamesmadison.org)  
[www.teapartypatriots.org](http://www.teapartypatriots.org)  
[www.floridateaparty.ning.com](http://www.floridateaparty.ning.com)



## Ten Principles to Improve Florida's Fiscal Soundness

1. **Make all government spending more transparent and accessible** by enabling the public to review the data on-line.
2. **Limit spending growth** to no more than the growth in population and inflation.
3. **Require voter approval** when elected officials wish to exceed the spending limit.
4. **Avoid "stealth" taxes, fees, and regulatory constraints** that conceal the true cost of government
5. **Avoid taxes, fees, and regulations that stifle** economic development and competitiveness.
6. **Avoid taxes that discourage** investors and savers from residing in Florida.
7. **Steer funding directly to students**, rather than to the schools, in order to improve education.
8. **Reform Medicaid**, a state budget category that is increasing at an unsustainable rate.
9. **Restore the private property insurance** market in Florida.
10. **Use private contractors** to supply government services when feasible.