

# **Board of County Commissioners**

## **Agenda Request**

Date of Meeting: February 17, 2009

Date Submitted: February 4, 2009

To: Honorable Chairman and Members of the Board

From: Lynn Artz, County Commissioner, District 5

Subject: Request Board Approval to Direct Staff to Prepare an Ordinance to Lower the Threshold for Citizen Initiatives under Wakulla County's Charter

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### **Statement of Issue:**

This agenda item requests Board approval to direct staff to prepare an Ordinance to lower the threshold for citizen initiatives under Wakulla County's Charter.

### **Background/Description:**

The County's Charter became effective January 1, 2009. Under the Charter, citizen initiatives must obtain petition signatures from 30 percent of the electorate in the County and also in each of the 5 Commission Districts. This threshold is extraordinarily high, much higher than recommended by the County's consultant and is customary in other Charter Counties. This threshold can be changed in only two ways: 1) Passage of an amendment Ordinance by a supermajority vote of the County Commission, or 2) Amendment by citizen petition. Either would be submitted to the electorate for approval during the next general election.

### **Analysis:**

Lowering the Charter's threshold for citizen initiatives would show respect for Wakulla County's citizens and remove a barrier that functionally prohibits citizen initiatives. Asking staff to begin work on an Ordinance now (if there appears to be supermajority support for a threshold consistent with other Charter Counties) will allow staff to perform this work as time permits while addressing more urgent issues. If the Board is not supportive of lowering the threshold, citizens will have time to try to do so by petition prior to the next general election.

### **Options:**

1. Direct staff to prepare an Ordinance to lower the threshold for citizen initiatives.
2. Do not direct staff to prepare on Ordinance to lower the threshold for citizen initiatives.
3. Board direction

### **Recommendation:**

Option #1