



TRI-COUNTY ASSOCIATION H.E.L.P., Inc.

Health
Environmental
Legislative
Policies

MEMORANDUM TO: Environmental Preservation and Conservation Committee Members:
Senator Dean, Chair; Senator Oelrich, Vice Chair,
Senators Rich, Sobel, Latvala, Jones, Detert

DATE: January 9, 2012

SUBJECT: STRIKE-ALL AMENDMENT, Senate Bill 820

TRI-County Association represents homeowners and businesses in Lake, Orange, and Seminole County. Our Board members and Advisors have been involved in this issue for more than six years and have conducted intense research. We have continuously attended all TRAP and RRAC meetings, Wekiva Basin Commission meetings and congressional EPA meetings. Three conclusions summarize facts we believe are important to your consideration of the Strike All Amendment to SB820: (1) septic systems are the least significant contributor to pollution issues, and (2) that properly installed and maintained septic systems are in fact very efficient at removing nutrients and bacteria, and lastly (3) the maximum benefit to the environment will be delivered if a simple and affordable inspection and maintenance process is put in place for communities to adopt and homeowners to follow.

This strike-all amendment to SB 820 puts simple inspection process and maintenance in place that imposes no cost to the State of Florida. It also protects the homeowner against excessive costs and devaluation of their property. It also provides for a means to protect all of Florida's springs. Communities know where the environmental "hot spots" are. It's in their own best interests to deal effectively and efficiently with them. They are also in the best position to accommodate the financial conditions of their residents, many of whom are facing extreme financial hardship. In Miami-Dade County, 500,000 are living in poverty, Broward County, nearly 250,000. The child poverty rate in Florida is 23.6%. Whether rented or owned, many of these homes have septic systems and are occupied by financially challenged families. However, we do not have to favor one goal over another. We believe this strike all amendment creates a situation where we, as a state, can deal realistically and sympathetically with local economic challenges without sacrificing clean water goals.

Senate Bill 550 introduced a scenario of huge cost to the state and the implementation proposals introduced staggering cost to our residents. It did not, however, introduce a reasonable cost/benefit justification. This strike-all amendment to SB820 removes those huge costs, and it provides exactly the cost/benefit justification that is needed in any worthwhile effort. It is the stuff of best practice solutions, good policy, and good legislation. After these many years of intense research and attention to the detail of this strike all amendment, we believe your yes vote is amply justified and validated by the science, the scope, and the nature of the problems this committee and our state's residents are trying to solve.

Thank you,
Andrea Samson, President
TRI-County Association H.E.L.P., Inc.