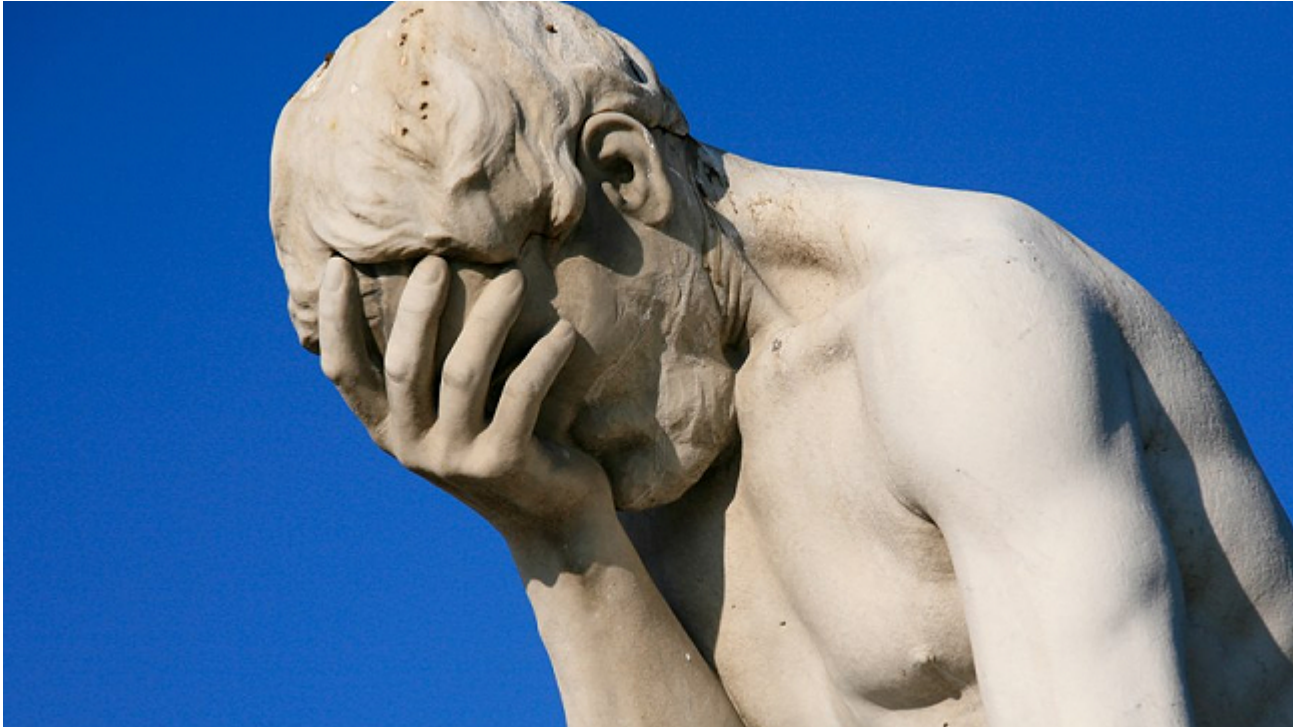


# Some Legislators Still Can't Grasp Simple Concept

June 5, 2015



The subcommittee chairman for the Senate funding package for [Amendment 1](#) refuses to follow the concept which the voters mandated by 75 per cent of the vote last November. The amendment, as passed, specifies “acquire land” or “land acquisition,” but some lawmakers wish to subvert that and interpret the law to their own liking.



Jim Turner

The way it is supposed to work is that the people elect other people to represent them in Tallahassee, not for those other people to represent themselves. It seems Mr. Hays' opinion represents about 25 percent of the voters . What about the 75 percent?

Following is the text of an article in today's [Gainesville Sun](#) which outlines this sad scenario, or follow this [link](#) for the original piece.

## ***Backers of land-buying face uphill climb***

*By Jim Turner*

*The News Service of Florida*

*Published: Wednesday, June 3, 2015 at 6:26 p.m.*

*Last Modified: Wednesday, June 3, 2015 at 6:26 p.m.*

*TALLAHASSEE – Despite continued lobbying and statewide rallies, lawmakers with control over a water- and land-funding package don't appear to be open to pleas to increase spending on environmental lands.*

*But as budget talks likely begin this weekend, with the Legislature focused more on deciding whether to expand health-care coverage and how much to earmark for education, proponents of a 2014 environmental ballot initiative say they will continue to push for an increase in spending on land and water projects.*

*“We hope when the dust settles, there will be enhanced funding for land management,” Janet Bowman of The Nature Conservancy said Wednesday.*

*But it won't be easy.*

*Sen. Alan Hays, a Umatilla Republican who chairs a subcommittee*

*that pieced together the Senate's funding package for the Water and Land Conservation Amendment, said this week that people demanding lawmakers reallocate more for land acquisition, primarily for water retention in the Everglades, are expressing "an uninformed idea."*

*"People need to understand the complete picture, not just the environmentalist war cry of 'Oh, let's buy more land! Let's buy more land,' " Hays said. "You need to understand decisions have consequences. And I'm not willing to raise the taxes on other people's property. Nor am I willing to neglect the property we already own."*

*Hays, who is among a number of lawmakers who have long stated there is an overabundance of Florida land already in government ownership, added that he is "embarrassed by some of my colleagues that have played politics with it. I don't appreciate it at all."*



*Sen. Alan  
Hays*

*The ballot initiative requires for the next 20 years that 33 percent of the proceeds from an existing real-estate tax, known as documentary stamps, go for land and water maintenance and acquisition.*

*Hays' comments drew scorn from environmentalists, who unsuccessfully pushed for the South Florida Water Management District to complete the purchase of 46,800 acres in the*

*Everglades from U.S. Sugar Corp.*

*“He is substituting his hostile opinion for the views of the voters,” Audubon Executive Director Eric Draper said Wednesday in an email response to Hays’ comments. “Land is needed for wildlife, water and recreation.”*

*U.S. Sugar, which came out this year in opposition to the sale of its land, now backs “shovel-ready” projects – some of which have yet to be affixed with a price tag – that Gov. Rick Scott pitched in his re-election campaign proposal to spend \$5 billion for Everglades projects over the next 20 years.*

*“Everglades restoration plans have taken a very specific direction over the last several years as governed by a federal consent decree and the state’s Everglades restoration strategies, an \$880 million investment that will complete the last phase of Everglades restoration,” U.S. Sugar spokeswoman Judy Sanchez said in an email on Wednesday.*

*Scott’s proposal also designates \$150 million annually for land acquisition and management, \$150 million a year for the Everglades for 20 years and \$50 million a year to protect natural springs.*

*For the upcoming year, the increased funding under Amendment 1 for such land and water programs will grow to more than \$700 million, from around \$470 million in the current budget year that ends June 30.*

*Lawmakers began a special session Monday that was called primarily to pass a budget. Proponents of Amendment 1 have problems with both the House and Senate proposed spending plans, in part because they include about \$230 million to maintain existing state environmental agency operations.*

*Sen. Joe Negron, in disagreeing with Hays about supporters politicizing the issue, said Wednesday his goal remains getting \$40 million set aside from Amendment 1, which could be bonded to create a \$500 million fund for future land purchases.*

*“The current budgets of the House and Senate are not adequately responsive to the requirements of Amendment 1,” Negron, R-Stuart, said. “I think what we’re trying to do is follow the intent of the voters. Amendment 1 specifically authorizes and anticipates the use of bonding and financing for large environmental land purchases.”*

*Negron added that there is enough unallocated funding in the budget, outside Amendment 1, that could be used to replace some of the agency spending now covered by Amendment 1 money.*

*“Some of the expenditures in the budget that are described as Amendment 1 funding are not true Amendment 1 funding,” Negron said. “The Senate budget is significantly more than the House budget, so instincts tell me that when we have conference (budget) allocations there will be additional unallocated funds available.”*

*The House has pitched \$18 million for water-management districts to manage land, while the Senate didn’t specify a similar proposal in its spending plan during this spring’s regular session. The House also offered a \$25 million line item for the Rural and Family Land Protection Program, an item that the Senate didn’t include in its proposed budget.*

*Meanwhile, the Senate proposed \$38.5 million to control invasive plants, with the House offering \$24.8 million.*

*As for land acquisition, during the regular session the House proposed selling \$205 million in bonds for the Florida Forever program, with about half the money going toward water*

*resources, the state's natural springs, Kissimmee River restoration, and ranchland preservation.*

*The Senate offered \$37 million for land acquisition, which is included with funding for Kissimmee River restoration and springs preservation.*

OSFR is appreciates that the *Gainesville Sun* permits us to publish their newspaper pieces in their entirety.

***This post rendered with LFS***