

THE TRUTH BEHIND KEY WEST REFERENDUMS



1.09, 1.10 & 1.11

THE ISSUE

Three referendums may appear on Key West citizens' ballots during the 2020 General Election. While these measures are disguised as being good for the health and well-being of Key West residents and the environment by limiting cruise ships, they in fact pose a real threat to local jobs and the economy by effectively banning all cruise ships into the Port of Key West.

The Florida Harbor Pilots Association (FHPA) represents the highly-trained harbor pilots that serve each of Florida's 14 deepwater ports, including the Key West Bar Pilots whose livelihoods, along with the livelihoods of countless others who thrive on Key West's tourism, will be irreversibly impacted if these referendums pass.

Unfortunately, confounding this issue in Key West is the abundance of misinformation in regard to what the measures will do in reality. Read on to learn more about why FHPA and the Key West Bar Pilots believe these measures are bad for Key West.

MYTH:

The three measures, if they passed collectively or individually, would merely reduce, not "eliminate," cruise ship traffic into the Port of Key West.

FACT:

If these ballot proposals to limit cruise ships allowed to dock at the Port of Key West were approved by voters, it would result in the elimination of 95 percent of cruise ship traffic. Moreover, if all three were to pass, the negative effects on the international and domestic commerce of the United States are so severe that the measures will invite protracted and costly litigation.

MYTH:

Larger cruise ships put our economy at risk.

FACT:

Quite the opposite. There is no doubt that having Key West serve as a port of call to hundreds of cruise ships each year is a significant generator of tourism for Key West. These ships have been docking at Key West for decades, and just last year brought more than one million visitors to Key West and generated nearly \$6 million in revenue for the city.

Without cruise ships, countless livelihoods would be negatively impacted – from restaurant and shop owners, to port employees, tour operators, attraction venues and even city port police and fire fighters; and yes, the harbor pilots would likely lose their jobs, too. With the statewide unemployment rate at 11.3 percent, now is not the time to eliminate a major economic driver to the state, region or city.

MYTH:

In light of COVID-19, Key West should eliminate cruise ships from coming into port, because they pose a risk to the health and well-being of residents, so these measures make good common sense.

FACT:

We are living in an unprecedented time and everyone, including the maritime industry, is having to adapt and evolve. As it stands, cruise ships are currently banned from docking in the U.S. with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention extending the no-sail order through September.

FHPA is confident that local, state and federal health authorities, along with local leaders, the business community and the cruise industry, will make certain the proper precautions are in place to ensure not only the health and safety of future cruise passengers, but of local residents and employees, when the time comes to reopen ports to cruise ships.

Today, through ballot initiatives, however, is not the time to make major changes to the very fabric of Key West's economy when it will need the tourism so many have built their lives around.