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State Study Confirms Existing Pilotage System Provides Greatest Benefit to Public & Ports

OPPAGA Report Determines Significant Advantages of Florida Harbor Pilots Services

Tallahassee, Fla. – An independent study conducted by the Office of Program Policy Analysis & Government Accountability (OPPAGA) confirms the existing pilotage system provides the greatest benefit to the public and Florida’s 11 deepwater ports. Also noted in the report, the Department of Business & Professional Regulation (DBPR) does not recommend modifying the existing harbor pilot regulation.

“As our state’s watch dogs for the numerous cruise and cargo ships coming in and out of our state’s ports, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, we are committed to ensuring Florida’s ports remain safe and secure,” said Captain Joseph Brown, president of the Florida Harbor Pilots Association (FHPA). “We are pleased that the study highlights that the advantages of the current piloting system far outweighs any possible disadvantages. It is our job to protect Florida’s waterways, channels and ports, and safeguard these economic drivers.”

The study finds that if foreign-flagged cruise and cargo ships were allowed to use their own foreign ship officers to navigate vessels into Florida’s ports, the safety of the public and ports could be threatened. In addition, allowing foreign ship officers to pilot their own ships may pose increased security, environmental and economic risks.

OPPAGA deters the Florida Legislature from authorizing local regulation, as it might result in lack of uniformity of piloting regulation across Florida and could threaten port safety with ports competing for each other’s business. The study also finds that abolishing state regulation in favor of federal government authority might threaten port safety because of less stringent federal requirements and competition between pilots, and could be difficult to ensure continual pilot availability in a competitive environment.

The report further details that the current system in place for pilotage rates is perceived to be fair and transparent and requiring Legislative approval of pilotage rates might further politicize rate setting. In addition, establishing a formula to determine maximum pilotage fees may not be feasible or useful due to the unique characteristics of each of Florida’s 11 deepwater ports.

To review the complete report conducted by OPPAGA and DBPR’s recommendations, please visit <http://www.oppaga.state.fl.us/MonitorDocs/Reports/pdf/1021rpt.pdf>.

(MORE)

The FHPA represents the interests of Florida's 97 professional harbor pilots, advocating on their behalf on various state and federal issues that impact the harbor pilots. The FHPA encourages its members to perform their function as pilots in a professional manner and subscribes to the philosophy that all harbor pilots should cooperate with all federal, state and local governmental authorities and regulatory bodies to the fullest extent possible in the preservation of life, the environment and property.

For more information on the FHPA, please visit www.floridapilots.com.

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