



Florida Maritime

In 2006, AIF formed the Florida Maritime Council (FMC) in response to the critical security and economic needs Florida's maritime businesses continue to face. AIF Maritime Council members, who represent more than 80 companies with operations covering the state, have identified serious problems that threaten their ability to compete with other port facilities located in other states such as duplicative security regulations, arbitrary harbor pilot fees, competing land uses and property taxes. The Council also plays a vital role in maintaining and advancing Florida's economic position in the country; while it's more short-term problems must be addressed to ensure these businesses survive long enough to benefit from strategic and long-term financial planning. A few of the most time consuming and costly circumstances that port employers currently face include:

- Minimal promotion of the economic development opportunities offered to the state by the maritime industries.
- Ongoing delays in security credentialing due to separate federal and state requirements.
- Excessive harbor pilot fees established through an outdated and monopolistic system.

Addressing these priorities, identified as economically onerous and operationally disruptive to maritime enterprises, is most essential to port businesses. These issues have shaped the FMC's legislative agenda and will be uniformly pursued in the upcoming session.

Over the past several years, the private-sector businesses that comprise Florida's maritime industry have positioned the state to be an international leader in exports to the Caribbean and beyond. The currently underway expansion of the Panama Canal offers unlimited future opportunities for which the state must begin preparing now. Other than security measures, state funding for ports is almost non-existent when compared to our neighboring, competitor states. Florida's 14 deep-water ports are more than a segment of Florida's transportation system. They are a vital economic development engine and legislators and state policymakers must place ports at the top of their funding priorities.

Council Position

The FMC supports efforts to establish better lines of communication between regulators and port tenants. The maritime industry deserves additional recognition and support to fulfill the economic rewards it has cultivated for the state. Such support can be realized by removal of the inconsistent, unfair and expensive regulations that currently burden these viable and thriving maritime businesses throughout the state.

Chair: Phillip A. Buhler, Esq.
Vice-Chair: Jennifer Nugent-Hill
Lobbyist: Tamela Perdue

Council Priorities

Maritime businesses in Florida have built the economic prowess of the state's ports into a major revenue producer and a critical component of the state's economy. Florida's government should proactively prevent commerce impediments, as well as support the development of our ports in an effort to allow maritime industries to reach their true potential and effectively compete in a global marketplace. Specifically, the Council will advocate for the following important legislative changes:

- Streamline security requirements to eliminate delay and duplication in credentialing.
- Identify and reduce regulatory impediments that stymie economic growth at Florida's ports, including the monopolistic system of setting harbor pilot fees.
- Restrict encroachment of alternative land uses on or near port property.
- Support economic development funding for Florida's ports.
- Support funding to deepen ports in Florida so the state can take full advantage of the bigger ships that will use the newly expanded Panama Canal.
- Support efforts to streamline arbitration procedures.