



# BUSINESS

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2009 FLORIDA TODAY file photo

**Lead the way.** Capt. David Callan guides the ship *KT Venture* out of Port Canaveral as the ship's captain Li Han Dong watches. A legislative report has not recommended restrictions to the harbor piloting system.

## Harbor pilots steer clear of rule change

### Maritime group pushing rate cut

BY PATRICK PETERSON  
FLORIDA TODAY

To the chagrin of the cruise industry and the relief of harbor pilots, a state report does not recommend major changes in the way the state's ports govern harbor pilots.

The two boards that govern highly paid, well-trained harbor pilots have vacancies or members serving with expired terms, according to a legislative report released in February. This could reduce the expertise and representation intended by state law.

The 20-page document, however, did not recommend loosening restrictions to allow foreign captains and crews to bring their vessels to berth without a pilot. While this could save shipping lines money, it could also put shipping at risk, the report said.

"It highlights the advantages of the current piloting system and that they far outweigh any possible disadvantages of trying to change the system," Port Canaveral harbor pilot Capt. David Callan said. "It calls for the status quo in the state of Florida to remain intact."

A cruise and cargo industry group, however, has seized the report as evidence the insular harbor pilot system needs changing by the state Legislature.

#### By the numbers

**\$66 billion**

Economic impact in Florida of cargo shipping industry in 2008

**\$6.3 billion**

Amount spent in Florida by passengers, crew and cruise lines in 2008

**\$1,317.68**

Average fee for a large vessel to enter a Florida port

**94**

Number of state licensed harbor pilots

**10**

Number of ships that enter Port Canaveral each day

— Florida Legislature

The Florida Alliance of Maritime Organizations, which hopes to reduce the rates paid to pilots, notes:

■ The Board of Pilot Commissioners and the Pilotage Rate Review Board are operating short of members due to long-term vacancies, which "may affect the boards' effectiveness."

■ Of the state's 94 active har-

bor pilots, 44 percent are 55 years or older. A rush of retirements soon could create a shortage of pilots.

■ FAMO also questioned the Board of Pilot Commissioners' accountability. During a three-year period, only three complaints of the 49 investigations resulted in disciplinary action.

"Our industries believe that the current pilotage structure needs reform," FAMO President Michele Paige said. "Laws governing the pilots were established some 36 years ago and the (legislative) study affirms to us that it's time to update this structure to accommodate open competition whereby a larger pool of adequately trained harbor pilots can offer their services."

The report put pilot's salaries at \$100,000 to over \$400,000, "similar to pilot compensation levels in other states with large ports." FAMO believes harbor pilots should be paid no more than air traffic controllers or ship captains, who generally earn less than \$200,000.

A computer search of the Florida House and Senate Web sites revealed no bills regarding "harbor pilots" had been introduced by last week for the legislative session that begins Tuesday.

"I don't see anything coming up about harbor pilots," state Senate spokesman Jaryn Emhof said. "There could be things in the works."

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