



December 22, 2020

Board of Pilot Commissioners
Ports of Galveston County
By electronic mail to: pgocqc@gmail.com
Galveston, TX 77550

To Whom It May Concern:

The Galveston Regional Chamber of Commerce would like to convey to the Board of Pilot Commissioners for Galveston County Ports its strongest endorsement in support of the Galveston-Texas City Pilots' request for an increase to the pilotage tariff for Galveston County waters. Though often unappreciated, the work of the Galveston-Texas City Pilots in preventing marine accidents in the ports of Galveston and Texas City, two powerful economic engines in our region, could not be more crucial to the county and its taxpayers.

The Chamber recognizes that unlike most governmental public safety functions, the Pilots Service is not funded by taxpayer dollars, but with funds paid to the Pilots by foreign shipping companies, who themselves often pay little or no tax. With those funds, the Pilots employ local citizens, operate boats locally, buy fuel and parts from local vendors, support local businesses, and pay federal and local property taxes. The Pilots are truly part of the fabric of the local community and local economy, and the influx of foreign shipping money to the Pilots Service feeds the local economy. Supporting the Pilots rate increase supports local businesses and the local tax base and preserves the quality of life and environment for those who work, play, or live on or near Galveston County waters.

The Chamber also recognizes that the Pilots' request is modest and reasonable, amounting, in most cases, to an increase less than the cost of inflation over the past five years. By comparison, the annual ad valorem taxes paid on the Galveston Pilot station have increased by nearly 3.5% compounded annually over a similar period.

A weakened or defunded Pilotage will be unable to keep the Galveston Bay entrance channel from becoming a hazardous "Wild West" wherein the biggest or richest companies dominate the shipping channels to the detriment of recreational boaters, commercial fishermen, tugs-and-barges, and smaller commercial cargo vessels. Such an unregulated environment would not be in the best interests of those who live and work in Galveston County.



The Chamber, in representing the hundreds of small businesses in Galveston County, most of whom rely on waterborne commerce for import and export, advocates for funding to promote a strong, competitive, and world class Pilot operation in the oldest major seaport in Texas, and urge you to approve the Pilots' request for a rate increase.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gina M. Spagnola".

Gina M. Spagnola,
President & CEO
Galveston Regional Chamber of Commerce

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Theresa Elliott".

Theresa Elliott,
Advocacy Committee Chair
Galveston Regional Chamber of Commerce