



Advocacy Funds Needed for 2020

Our plan to retain the services of our Florida lobbyist for 2020 is in jeopardy. So far, [contributions](#) to fund this effort have been far below previous years. We know the holiday season is probably the worst time to make this request. Boaters' attention is elsewhere, and budgets are tight. But now is the time to confirm that we can afford the services of our lobbyist for next year.

For our newer members, or those who would like a reminder, following is a recap of the past few years in Florida where boaters' rights to anchor have been challenged.

History:

For several years, anchorages have been under attack in Florida. Sometimes, the efforts to eliminate anchorages are led by waterfront home owners who prefer not to have boats anchored in the waterways outside their homes. More often, however, responsible boaters are caught up in the "derelict vessels" issue, which is a serious problem in Florida. Municipalities are attempting to solve the derelict vessel problem by banning anchoring altogether, thinking that doing so will make it easier to rid their area of abandoned boats and/or those anchored with no intention (nor ability, in many cases) of ever moving. This approach is obviously detrimental to active cruisers.

In 2015, a bill was filed to ban anchoring within 200 feet of developed waterfront property in Florida. *Cruisers were successful in defeating that bill*, in part due to the efforts of our coalition and our retained lobbyist.

In 2016, thinking the need for our engagement was over, the boating community did not actively participate in the process in Tallahassee. With no one actively opposing it, a bill passed that closed four areas in the Miami/Fort Lauderdale area to overnight anchoring.

Because of the failure in 2016, our coalition re-engaged in 2017 and was *successful in keeping the power to regulate anchoring with the state government*, rather than municipalities. This was an important win because it prevents a patchwork of laws from being passed by various municipalities and counties. Further, no new anchorages were added to the list of those where overnight anchoring is prohibited.

In 2018, an amendment to restrict overnight anchoring in two more anchorages was attached to a bill, but *we were successful in getting the amendment withdrawn* from the bill before a vote was taken.

In 2019 and 2020, we now must fight the battle in Georgia.

Expectations for the 2020 Legislative Session:

We are expecting the legislative delegates representing several additional municipalities to once again try to amend the existing statute to add their anchorages to the list of those that are closed to overnight anchoring. Attempts by Madeira Beach to sidestep the state's regulation of anchorages earlier this year met resistance from boaters and our lobbyist who noted that the city does not have the power to do so. That municipality could move that fight to the proper venue--the state level--and request to be added to the list of places where overnight anchoring is banned. Some municipalities have perennially had their legislative delegation file bills to eliminate overnight anchoring in their waters, and without opposition from boaters, they may be successful in 2020. In addition, cities not previously active in this on-going debate, who now have new representatives in Tallahassee, have already made known their desire to rid certain areas of boats at anchor. We must remain vigilant or we face losing the right to anchor in additional areas.

Our overall goal is to find a compromise so that this level of effort, and the associated funds, are not required year after year. We are not there yet, but there are some ideas on the table, and stakeholders are engaged in the process in advance of the 2020 legislative session to talk about the possibilities. We are hopeful that this year could be a turning point if we can afford to remain highly involved.

The most successful way to have our voices heard and to get results has been representation by a lobbyist who knows the ins-and-outs of the legislative process in Florida. The lobbyist that has represented your interests in the past has been very successful. But, of course, there is a cost associated with his efforts. We hope that once again those costs can be shared among our full coalition, which includes Marine Trawler Owners Association (MTOA), America's Great Loop Cruisers' Association (AGLCA), Seven Seas Cruising Association (SSCA), and the DeFever Cruisers.

What We Need from Cruisers:

We are [asking for contributions](#) to help fund our advocacy efforts. Last year, boaters were generous. About \$8,000 remains from our coalition's 2019 call for funding. We estimate needing an additional \$20,000 for the 2020 legislative session.

SSCA does not use membership dues or any of its general funds to support advocacy. We are active advocates for our members in many ways, but we handle most issues with staff time and expertise, and grass-roots efforts from our members when needed. However, Florida is a bell-weather state that has a strong influence on other states' boating laws, so we believe action is required here. We know that there are some of you who may not be interested in this issue so we've taken the approach of asking our members to contribute individually to specific issues when needed and we leave it up to each of you to decide whether to participate.

If the funds collected exceed what is needed to engage our Lobbyist, the remainder of SSCA member contributions will be held by the Association to help offset travel costs for members or staff who may go to Tallahassee to participate in the process. The remaining excess, if it exists, will be held for use on future advocacy efforts.

If you would like to contribute to the advocacy fund, use this [link](#).