

## **Harbour Pilots' \$300k Salary Threatened**

**Wednesday, October 21, 2009**

The battle between the shipping industry and harbor pilots is heating up again as a state review that could curb the latter's salaries nears.

The Florida Alliance of Maritime Organizations, which represents cruise and cargo shipping companies, released a study saying that the state-run system curbs the number of pilots available, according to a Llyods List, a maritime newspaper.

The study conducted by the Washington Economics Group said the 88 Florida pilots at the state's 14 ports earn an average salary of \$368,000. International airline pilots earn \$225,000 and air traffic controller earn \$112,000.

“The pilot system needs to be transformed from a state protected monopoly to a competitive system that is both safe and efficient. The time has come to level the playing field, so that a larger pool of maritime professionals can help ships safely port in Florida,” Michelle Paige, the alliance's president, said.

The study found that a more open and market-driven system would result in more jobs and lower consumer costs.

Florida Harbour Pilots' Association spokeswoman Sarah Bascom said the study was an attempt by the cruise industry to cut costs and damage port security by eliminating the requirement of pilots who understand the local waters.