

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
FINAL BILL ANALYSIS**

**BILL #:** HB 395 (SB 326)

**FINAL HOUSE FLOOR ACTION:**

**SPONSOR(S):** Broxson and others (Bullard)

115 Y's

0 N's

**COMPANION  
BILLS:** SB 326

**GOVERNOR'S ACTION:** Approved

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**SUMMARY ANALYSIS**

HB 395 passed the House on March 7, 2012 as SB 326.

The bill designates the schooner Western Union as the official flagship of the State of Florida.

The bill does not have a fiscal impact on state or local governments.

The bill was approved by the Governor on April 27, 2012, ch. 2012-158, Laws of Florida. The effective date of the bill is July 1, 2012.

## I. SUBSTANTIVE INFORMATION

### A. EFFECT OF CHANGES:

#### Background

##### Schooner Western Union

The schooner Western Union is a historic floating museum, the official flagship of Key West, and on the National Register of Historic Places.<sup>1,2</sup>

The schooner is a 130-foot vintage, wooden, sailing vessel of the tall ship class, made of mahogany and yellow pine.<sup>3</sup> Construction began in Grand Cayman and was completed in Key West on April 7, 1939. For 35 years, the schooner served as a cable vessel for the Western Union Telegraph Company, repairing and maintaining undersea telegraph cable throughout Key West, Cuba, and the Caribbean. After retiring from Western Union, the schooner was used as a charter boat and in various events celebrating the United States' Bicentennial. Today, the schooner Western Union is being prepared to open as a maritime museum and will be open to the public for sailing and dock tours.

The Schooner Western Union Preservation Society (SWUPS) is a not-for-profit corporation founded for the purpose of restoring, maintaining and operating the Schooner Western Union Maritime Museum in Key West. In addition to the restoration of the schooner, SWUPS plans to operate the boat as a maritime museum with an educational outreach program. Initial funding will be obtained through corporate sponsorships, grants, and individual donations. Once initial restoration is complete and Coast Guard certification is restored, funds will be generated from the daily operation of the vessel. Additionally, a fund will be created from income exceeding operating expenses for the purpose of maintaining the vessel for future generations.<sup>4</sup>

##### State Designations

Current law designates 39 official state designations including official state maritime, transportation, and railroad museums. However, current law does not provide a designation for an official flagship of the State of Florida.<sup>5</sup>

#### Proposed Changes

The bill designates the schooner Western Union as the official flagship of the State of Florida.

## II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

### A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues: None.
2. Expenditures: None.

### B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.schoonerwesternunion.org/key-west/boat-history.htm> (last visited January 25, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> National Park Service Digital Library, National Register of Historic Places, at <http://nrhp.focus.nps.gov/natreghome.do?searchtype=natreghome> (last visited January 25, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> Merriam Webster online dictionary, at <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tall%20ship>, defines a tall ship as a sailing vessel with at least two masts (last visited January 25, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.schoonerwesternunion.org/key-west/flagship-about-us.htm> (last visited January 25, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> See chapter 15, F.S.

1. Revenues: None.
2. Expenditures: None.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

Obtaining the status of state flagship could increase the marketability of the Schooner Western Union Maritime Museum, thereby generating additional revenue that the Schooner Western Union Preservation Society may use for the purpose of maintaining the vessel.<sup>6</sup>

D. FISCAL COMMENTS: None.

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<sup>6</sup> Key West's Flagship Schooner Western Union Maritime Museum, at Funding & Sponsorships, <http://www.schoonerwesternunion.org/key-west/schooner-preservation-society.htm> (last visited December 22, 2011).