

I would like to offer an alternative opinion to Sunday's editorial regarding "at large" elections.

In November 1996 , Key West voters were asked via a non binding referendum if they would like to return to "at large" elections. 76.7% of the Key West voters said "Yes" and still today we are single member districts.

Sunday's Editorial statement that the "single member district" (SMD) system currently in place has worked well for the past 20 years may raise an eyebrow or two in our Community. While there is probably no perfect election system, we must seriously consider giving the voters a stronger voice by returning to "at large" elections. Our (6) Commissioners would still live in their neighborhoods making them easily accessible. To make effective, long term decisions benefitting the majority of Key West residents we must however work across District lines. A cohesive Commission doesn't mean that there can not be meaningful discussion or alternative viewpoints addressed on the dais. It means working together to come to a city wide consensus.

It has been suggested that only affluent candidates could afford to campaign city wide in "at large" elections. We are a "2 x 4 mile island"! Candidates have every opportunity to reach voters and communicate their positions via the free political forums offered by organizations in Key West every election cycle. It has also been stated that SMD elections encourage more candidates to run for office and yet 2 of the 3 candidates currently up for election are running unopposed. I ran unopposed in 2011 as did Commissioner Rossi.

When the entire commission is accountable to 14,500 registered voters, there is a reasonable expectation that Commissioners will work effectively to solve our long standing issues; affordable living, senior housing, congestion, parking and traffic. Issues shouldn't languish for 15 years like the Truman Waterfront.

Now, more than ever, we need a cohesive Commission to address new threats to our quality of life in Key West such as adequate local health care options, addressing the Zika virus, sea level rise and most recently the quality of our drinking water supply.

Bring it to a vote of the people.

Teri Johnston

Key West