



## MEMORANDUM

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Date: January 6, 2026

To: Honorable Mayor and Commissioners

Via: Brian Barroso  
City Manager

CC: Christina Bernaldi  
Director of Finance

From: Lucas Torres-Bull  
Procurement Manager

Subject: **File ID 25-4882 – Awarding RFP #25-022 to The Southern Group of Florida and TSG Advocates to provide state and federal lobbying services for the City of Key West, Florida; Authorizing the City Manager, or designee, to negotiate and execute a contract with The Southern Group of Florida and TSG Advocate for an initial term of one (1) year, commencing upon execution, and to execute any related documents, administrative actions, budget transfers / adjustments or contract modifications necessary for implementation of the contract, upon consent of the City Attorney.**

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### **Introduction**

Staff recommends that the Mayor and City Commission approve a resolution authorizing the City Manager, or designee, to enter into negotiations and, upon successful completion of those negotiations, execute an agreement with The Southern Group of Florida and TSG Advocates for the provision of state and federal lobbying services pursuant to Request for Proposals (RFP) No. 25-022.

This recommendation is made following completion of the competitive RFP process and a determination by City staff that entering into negotiations with The Southern Group of Florida and TSG Advocates is in the best interest of the City, based on demonstrated experience, prior performance, and the City's operational needs.

### **Background**

On November 19, 2025, at 8:30 a.m. (Eastern Standard Time), the City of Key West publicly advertised RFP No. 25-022 in *The Citizen* newspaper and posted the solicitation on DemandStar, in accordance with City procurement requirements. The RFP sought proposals from qualified firms to provide state and federal lobbying services on behalf of the City.

Proposals were due and received as sealed submissions and were formally opened on December 10, 2025, in the Office of the City Clerk. The City received three (3) proposals submitted by the following firms:

- Pittman Law Group, P.L.
- The Southern Group of Florida and TSG Advocates
- Becker & Poliakoff, P.A.

Following the proposal opening, the City advertised the Selection Committee meeting date, time, and location in *The Citizen*. Notice of the meeting was transmitted to *The Citizen* on December 10, 2025, and subsequently published on December 11, 2025, in compliance with public notice requirements.

The Selection Committee thereafter convened to review and evaluate the proposals in accordance with the evaluation criteria and scoring methodology set forth in the RFP. Upon completion of the evaluation process, the committee ranked the proposers based on their total scores, with Becker & Poliakoff, P.A. identified as the highest-ranked proposer.

### **Best Interest Determination and Recommendation**

While Becker & Poliakoff, P.A. received the highest overall evaluation score, the RFP process allows the City to consider factors beyond numerical ranking when determining the proposer with whom to proceed, provided the decision is reasonable, documented, and in the best interest of the City.

Following review of the evaluation results and consideration of the City's operational needs, the City Manager has determined that The Southern Group of Florida and TSG Advocates are uniquely positioned to best serve the City's interests at this time. This determination is based on, but not limited to, the following considerations:

- Demonstrated prior experience working with the City of Key West, including familiarity with the City's legislative priorities, governance structure, and operational environment;
- Proven track record of successful past performance representing the City in state and federal advocacy matters;
- Established working relationships and institutional knowledge that reduce transition risk and support continuity of services; and
- Alignment with the City's current needs and strategic objectives related to legislative advocacy.

Based on these factors, staff recommends that the City enter into negotiations with The Southern Group of Florida and TSG Advocates, notwithstanding the numerical ranking of proposals, as permitted under a competitive RFP process when supported by a documented best-interest determination.

Should negotiations not result in mutually agreeable contract terms, the City reserves the right to discontinue negotiations and proceed in accordance with the RFP and applicable procurement requirements.

### **Procurement**

The total cost for the procurement of state and federal lobbying services is proposed on a monthly retainer basis. The monthly retainer is \$7,500.00 for state lobbying services and \$12,500.00 for federal

lobbying services, resulting in an annual flat-fee equivalent of \$90,000.00 for state lobbying services and \$150,000.00 for federal lobbying services.

In addition to the monthly retainer, The Southern Group of Florida and TSG Advocates has identified an hourly rate of \$250.00 for any additional or “as-needed” services that may be requested by the City. Travel, lodging, and other reimbursable expenses are included in the proposed rates and encompass travel, lodging, labor, equipment, and administrative expenses. No additional charges shall be billed to the City unless mutually agreed upon in advance and only under extraordinary circumstances.

Sufficient funds for both state and federal lobbying services are currently budgeted within the General Fund, account number 0011201-5123100.

### **Recommendation**

Staff recommends that the Mayor and City Commission approve a resolution authorizing the City Manager, or designee, to enter into negotiations and, upon successful completion of those negotiations, execute an agreement with The Southern Group of Florida and TSG Advocates for the provision of state and federal lobbying services pursuant to Request for Proposals (RFP) No. 25-022.