

Citizens Not Serfs

Media Contact

Sheena Collum
305.745.1715
Sheena@CitizensNotSerfs.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Residents Gather to Support Critical Concern and Condemn FEMA Enforcement Monroe County Residents Meet With Politicians To Address Concerns

Summerland Key, FL (August 10, 2008) A grassroots Keys' organization calling itself "Citizens Not Serfs" held a meeting this past Sunday with over 200 residents in attendance. On the agenda were two Key issues: permanently retaining the Florida Keys Area of Critical Concern designation and FEMA's interference with downstairs enclosures.

Sheena Collum, Executive Director of Citizens Not Serfs, noted that, "As long as there are individuals who wish to develop the Keys and politicians who won't listen to the voices of its residents, this battle will continue to be fought until legislation is in place calling for indefinite state oversight for what is truly a national treasure."

State Representative Ron Saunders assured the group that his support for this issue will continue, "My predecessor filed legislation to de-designate in 2009 and I want you to know that I differ. I think we should keep that designation."

Citizens Not Serfs is also taking an aggressive stance against FEMA's enforcement and strict penalties associated with non-conforming downstairs enclosures. An announcement was made that a new marketing campaign will launch featuring Keys residents that have been negatively impacted by FEMA's policy. These "resident stories" will be advertised throughout the Keys and delivered to FEMA headquarters.

Steve Hickson, marketing coordinator for the campaign said, "The results of the FEMA Pilot Program on Keys residents has been horrendous and the rubber really meets the road on this issue when you see and hear the negative impact on Keys residents. We're going to take these testimonials, personalize this campaign and create a real-life representation of what is happening in the Keys - how a historical lack of national oversight and a lack of county enforcement continues to result in punitive measures being passed down to residents."

Heather Carruthers, County Commissioner candidate for District 3 encouraged the group by reflecting on her similar experience working with the grassroots organization Fair Insurance Rates in Monroe ("FIRM") which brought down windstorm insurance rates. "I found that the State and the Feds will recognize us and respect us when we present a cogent argument. You have the numbers and the data but you also need the heart and passion behind it. Once you marry those two things together, you're unbeatable."

Collum closed by saying, "I'd like to believe that no one is a victim of their circumstances. Not long ago, many of you thought you were alone and now as you see thousands of others just like you who share your similar concerns, you can finally stand together and speak as one."

Also in attendance were County Commissioner Candidates Bill Estes, Sonny McCoy and Sloan Bashinsky. Sheriff candidates Bob Peryam, Ken Davis and Sandy Downs and State Attorney candidate Dennis Ward.

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