

20 UNOPPOSED KEYS CANDIDATES GET EASY WINS

By **Gwen Filosa** - June 20, 2024



Key West's next mayor is Danise "Dee Dee" Henriquez, who was automatically elected on June 14, as no one else signed up to run for the city's top office.

Henriquez raised \$51,695 for her campaign and spent \$17,458, according to campaign finance records. She will succeed Mayor Teri Johnston, who chose not to seek reelection.

In another uncontested race, Donie Lee, the former Key West police chief, won the City Commission District 3 seat to succeed Commissioner Billy Wardlow, a former fire chief.



Across the Florida Keys, 20 political races were settled outright on June 14, when the qualifying period for county and state races ended with no other opponents on the ballot. The uncontested races handed many Keyswide officials automatic victories.

Monroe County Commissioner Craig Cates of Key West won another term, along with Monroe County Judge James Morgan III, school board member Mindy Conn and Key West Utility Board member Patrick Labrada.

Monroe County Sheriff Rick Ramsay, who enters his fourth term as sheriff, said he's thankful he was unopposed.

"Coming out uncontested only shows a sign of support and confidence from the community and the work my team and I are doing to keep you safe and secure," Ramsay said in a video posted on Facebook.

"I'm proud of this agency and this community, the men and women I work with and the people I work for," Ramsay said.

In Key Colony Beach, all four candidates who had signed up for individual seats on the nonpartisan city council were elected with no opposition: Doug Colonell, Thomas DiFransico, Thomas Harding and Joey Raspe.

The Florida Keys Mosquito Control Board's Jill Cranney-Black, Brandon Pinder and Dr. Stan Zuba will all return having seen no challengers. Nick Rodriguez and Phillip Schwartz will return to the Key Largo Wastewater District having garnered no additional candidates.

Property Appraiser Scott Russell, County Clerk Kevin Madok and Tax Collector Sam Steele will all return to their posts having gone unopposed.

Michael McDonald, a professor of political science at the University of Florida, said small jurisdictions are much less likely to hold contested elections than big cities.



"You've got people fairly satisfied with how local government is being run," McDonald told Keys Weekly. "Without controversy, you're not going to get a lot of interest. Local elections aren't particularly ideological. They're not about abortion. They're more about filling potholes. They're not going to really rouse a lot of passions."

Two particular races saw a bit of shuffling just before the deadline as one candidate withdrew from a county race to announce his candidacy for state representative.



Trending

REIMAGINING THE SEVEN MILE BRIDGE: FDOT SEEKS INPUT ON REPLACEMENT BRIDGE

Republican Jose Peixoto withdrew from the race for Monroe County Commission's District 5 in an attempt to challenge Republican State Rep. Jim Mooney in the Aug. 20 primary election. Peixoto was disqualified from the race for the state's District 120, according to the Florida Division of Elections. [Read more here.](#)

Jim McCarthy contributed to this story.

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Gwen Filosa is The Keys Weekly's Digital Editor, and has covered Key West news, culture and assorted oddities since she moved to the island in 2011. She was previously a reporter for the Miami Herald and WLRN public radio. Before moving to the Keys, Gwen was in New Orleans for a decade, covering criminal courts for The Times-Picayune. In 2006, the paper's staff won the Pulitzer Prizes for breaking news and the Public Service Medal for their coverage of the Hurricane Katrina disaster. She remains a devout Saints fan. She has a side hustle as a standup comedian, and has been a regular at Comedy Key West since 2017. She is also an acclaimed dogsitter, professional Bingo caller and a dedicated Wilco fan.



