



Forum draws candidates for 2018 elections

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Key West Mayor Craig Cates couldn't resist this joke when he took the stage Monday at Hometown!'s 2018 call-for-candidates event.

"The city attorney found a way I could run one more time," Cates said, bursting into laughter along with the crowd as emcee Todd German playfully tried to take the microphone out of his hands.

Cates, first elected in 2009, is in his final year as mayor, making the race a rare wide-open contest with no incumbent.

"I'm a prime example of somebody that never ran before and just wanted to be involved," Cates said. "I was definitely out of my comfort zone. I want to get more people to come out and get involved; it's very important. I consider this community service."

City Commissioner Jimmy Weekley, whose three-decade tenure in office included serving as mayor from 1999 to 2005, got up later to announce he would not be seeking the seat, adding he wants to squash any water-cooler talk that he wanted the job again so as not to discourage anyone from running.

"I wanted to kill that rumor right off the bat," Weekley said.

Dave Gonzales and Monroe Holloway, both native Key Westers and political newcomers, said Monday night during the forum at Salute! On the Beach they were considering running for mayor.

Gonzales said a mayor needs to be a strategic leader and counted affordable housing and environmental protection as his top concerns.

Holloway, who introduced himself as a millennial, told the crowd that perhaps many of the employees at Salute! and others in the service industry struggle far too much to make it on the expensive island known for its motto of One Human Family. Too many of them are forced to move away due to finances, Holloway said.

“We wear it as a chip of honor to have survived in Key West, Florida, for X amount of years,” Holloway said. “It’s a badge of honor. I’m losing friends.”

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