



2024 Legislative Talking Points

GENERAL

- Tourism is Florida's top industry.
- Tourism is major source of revenue for the state and for local communities and the industry is one of Florida's largest employers – putting more than 1.7 million Floridians to work.
- While tourism contributes to Florida's economic vitality and empowers the state's growth, it is also what makes living in the Sunshine State so great.
- Thanks, in part, to the revenue generated by tourism, Florida residents don't pay a state income tax. That makes Florida one of only eight states without a state income tax.
- Tourism revenue also helps to keep the tax base low for residents.
- Visitors save every Florida household more than \$1,500 a year on state and local taxes.
- Local revenue generated from tourism also pays for services and programs that benefit every Floridian.
- These are critical services upon which Floridians rely, such as education, public safety, road building and maintenance, and environmental programs.
- In addition to the local and state government revenue generated by tourism, visitors also contribute to local economies by patronizing businesses, shops, restaurants and attractions within Florida's communities.

LOCAL

- Here's what tourism means to our community, your district and your constituents.
- Visitors to [INSERT COUNTY NAME] County generate \$[INSERT REVENUE NUMBER] in local revenue.
- Overall, tourism provides \$[INSERT ECONOMIC IMPACT NUMBER] in economic impact to [INSERT COUNTY NAME] County.
- More than [INSERT NUMBER] of our neighbors have jobs thanks to tourism.
- But, the impacts of visitors to [INSERT COUNTY NAME] County are so much more than just numbers.
- [PROVIDE HUMAN INTEREST EXAMPLES – NAMES OF BUSINESSES AND BUSINESS OWNERS WHO MAKE A LIVING OFF TOURISM]
- These are restaurants, hotels, shops, attractions and museums that have endured through hurricanes and now a pandemic.
- [HIGHLIGHT ICONIC ATTRACTIONS/RESTAURANTS/HOTELS IN THE AREA]
- It's our job as your local tourism promotion organization to keep attracting visitors to our community so these beloved businesses can remain in business. And, so our community's residents can continue to reap the tax savings tourism provides and receive critical services without having to dig deeper into their own pockets.
- [SHARE INFORMATION ABOUT CURRENT VISITOR CAMPAIGNS OR OTHER WAYS YOUR DMO IS WORKING TO ATTRACT VISITORS TO YOUR DESTINATION]

TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAXES/PERMISSIBLE USES OF TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAXES

- Tourist Development Taxes are how communities fund their local tourism promotion efforts.
- Tourist Development Taxes were established to ensure counties had a dedicated funding source for the tourism promotion efforts necessary to create jobs and generate local revenue.
- Residents do not pay these taxes, rather they are paid by visitors to local communities.
- The hotel and lodging industry volunteered to have these taxes levied on themselves so there would be a dedicated revenue stream for local tourism promotion with the single purpose of maintaining and growing visitation levels to the area.
- At the request of Florida hoteliers, the Florida Legislature passed a state law that would allow counties to levy Tourist Development Taxes. Local voters then approved Tourist Development Taxes through a countywide referendum.
- Any changes to the current permissible uses of Tourist Development Taxes would be a breach of this agreement the Florida hotel and lodging industry made to voluntarily tax itself.
- Local tourism promotion organizations oversee the use of Tourist Development Taxes with additional oversight from the Board of County Commissioners.
- Tourist Development Taxes are primarily intended for use on local tourism promotion, construction of tourist-related facilities and beach and shoreline maintenance.
- However, Tourist Development Taxes are not only used for tourism promotion. They also enable counties to build enough in reserve to fund projects that benefit local communities and their residents, such as beach renourishment projects and building of sports complexes.
- Maintaining the current permissible uses of Tourist Development Taxes – for expenditures related to tourism promotion – ensures that Florida communities can continue to attract visitors and reap the benefits of the local sales tax revenue they generate and the jobs they create.

LAST YEAR'S LEGISLATION

- Last year, the Florida House of Representatives proposed legislation that amounted to the biggest attack ever on Florida's tourism industry by attempting to take away the state's and local communities' ability to effectively promote their tourist destinations.
- The bill took aim at Visit Florida, as well as counties' locally generated Tourist Development Taxes, which help fund local tourism promotion efforts.
- Visit Florida and local tourism promotion organizations perform separate and necessary functions in order to keep our state's tourism industry healthy and our economy vibrant. Visit Florida promotes the State of Florida as a whole to potential visitors while local tourism promotion organizations promote their own communities' unique travel offerings.
- The legislation proposed last year would have completely altered Visit Florida's funding mechanism and operations in a way that would have ultimately led to its demise.
- It would have eliminated state funding for Visit Florida and would have forced counties to send Visit Florida a portion of their Tourist Development Taxes in order to pay for the state entity.
- Last year's bill would have stripped local governments' control by extracting \$75 million in locally generated Tourist Development Taxes and sending it to Tallahassee to fund Visit Florida.
- It also would have put every county that collects Tourist Development Taxes and every organization that relies on them in jeopardy of losing this revenue source permanently by putting those taxes up for a referendum every six years.
- This was a bad bill that would have negatively impacted all of Florida's tourism industry, and the jobs and revenue generated by what is Florida's top industry. We are concerned similar legislation may be proposed in this upcoming legislative session.