

HTML Message



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VISIT FLORIDA

Recently, Florida House Speaker Richard Corcoran has called into question the value of the state's public-private marketing agency, [Visit Florida](#), suggesting that the House may significantly reduce or completely eliminate state funding for Visit Florida.

In response to political pushback, the Visit Florida Board of Directors recently announced former Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation Secretary [Ken Lawson](#) as the agency's new **President / CEO**, whose experience in Tallahassee may help navigate a particularly challenging upcoming **Legislative Session** beginning on March 7.

Visit Florida received **\$76 million** in state funding in 2016, with all indications pointing to yet **another year of near-record visitation**, despite many obstacles the state faced, including **Hurricane Matthew** and the global media coverage of the **Zika virus** outbreak in South Florida.

The CFHLA Board of Directors approved the association's [2017 Legislative Priorities](#) last November, which includes the support of **continued or increased funding levels for Visit Florida**. CFHLA firmly believes that increased visitation in recent years is a result of increased funding of the state's marketing efforts through Visit Florida.

CFHLA asks you to get involved by contacting your State Representative and State Senator to express your support, as a Hospitality leader, for continued Visit Florida funding.

To identify your Elected Leaders in Tallahassee, please [CLICK HERE](#).

To contact these individuals, please visit the "[Contact Local Elected Officials](#)" page of the CFHLA website [HERE](#).

If you have any questions, please contact CFHLA Director of Public Policy Kevin Craig at publicpolicy@cfhla.org

TDT

During the 2016 Legislative Session, legislation was passed that included an expansion of the allowed uses of the **Tourist Development Tax (TDT)** in Bay, Okaloosa and Walton Counties, all located in the Florida Panhandle. This legislation allowed for these counties to utilize TDT funds for "public safety" purposes and not for **tourism promotion**.

Since the inception of the Central Florida Hotel & Lodging Association, the organization has always maintained a central Legislative Priority of **"preserving the integrity of the Tourist Development Tax."**

In efforts to preserve the TDT and "walk-back" the 2016 TDT-expanding legislation passed for the Panhandle counties, CFHLA has partnered with Elected Leaders in the State House and Senate to **"sunset" or repeal the 2016 legislation.**

In the coming days, **State Senator David Simmons** will be filing a bill at the request of CFHLA that will amend the 2016 TDT legislation to make it more challenging for the Panhandle counties to use TDT funds for non-tourism promotion purposes and will "sunset" (schedule to expire) the 2016 language in three years.

In the Florida House, similar legislation will be filed that will focus on eliminating the Panhandle county TDT language and protecting the TDT from future incursions.

GA

On Wednesday, January 11th, the **CFHLA Governmental Affairs Committee** met with **newly-elected Orange County Commissioner (District 5) Emily Bonilla**. Commissioner Bonilla defeated incumbent Commissioner Ted Edwards on November 8th, 2016 and has not previously held an elected office in Central Florida.

The GA Committee met with Commissioner Bonilla at the law offices of **Lowndes, Drosdick, Doster, Kantor & Reed, P.A.** thanks to meeting host and GA Committee Member **Jackie Bozzuto**. Additionally, the President & CEO of the firm, **Bill Dymond Jr.** joined the Committee for the conversation with Commissioner Bonilla.



CFHLA Board 1st Vice Chairman and Governmental Affairs Committee Vice Chair Fred Sawyers (left) of the Walt Disney World Swan & Dolphin Resort and CFHLA Board Member and CFHLA PAC Secretary Mark Politte (right) of the DoubleTree by Hilton at the Entrance to Universal Orlando with Orange County Commissioner Emily Bonilla.

The GA Committee discussed a range of Orange County issues with Commissioner Bonilla, including the importance of the **Tourist Development Tax**, CFHLA efforts to amend the County's **alcohol ordinance** and the development of a **"level playing field" between Sharing Economy companies** and traditional lodging and transportation companies.

In February, the GA Committee is looking forward to meeting with **State Representative Rene Plasencia** at the **Waldorf Astoria Orlando**, courtesy of 2017 **GA Committee Chairman Peter Kacheris**.

TOURISM DAY

With Visit Florida funding in jeopardy and the Tourist Development Tax needing protection, CFHLA is inviting you to participate in **2017 Florida Tourism Day at the State Capitol**.

This year's Tourism Day event will take place on **Tuesday, March 14th** when a delegation of **over 25 CFHLA Members** travel via motor coach (thanks to **Mears Transportation**) to Tallahassee for a full day of meetings with over 12 State Representatives and State Senators to lobby in support of CFHLA's Legislative Priorities.



The 2016 CFHLA Tourism Day at the Capitol Delegation

This day begins at 5:30 AM, when the CFHLA delegation departs the CFHLA offices. Following a day of marching across the Capitol building, promoting the importance of tourism, the motor coach will return to Orlando at approximately 10 PM.

CFHLA shows "**strength in numbers**" at this annual Tourism Day event, filling the meeting rooms of Elected Officials and educating state leaders on the importance of Visit Florida funding, preserving the Tourist Development Tax and detailing the remainder of the association's Legislative Priorities.



2016 CFHLA Members met with State Representative
Jason Brodeur - District 28 at the State Capitol

To view all of CFHLA's 2017 Legislative Priorities, please [CLICK HERE](#).

If you are interested in participating in 2017 Florida Tourism Day, please contact CFHLA Director of Public Policy Kevin Craig at publicpolicy@cfhla.org

ALCOHOL

Orange County staff members are currently reviewing a proposal put forth by CFHLA to amend **Orange County's alcohol ordinance** relating to **hours of sale and service**. Currently, Orange County businesses may only serve alcohol to guests between the hours of 11 AM to 2 AM, with only a few exceptions.

CFHLA has proposed that hotels, restaurants and other "professional" settings (not to include gas stations, liquor stores, etc.) have their hours of sale and service shifted to **7 AM to 2 AM**, consistent with the **City of Orlando** and neighboring counties.

Last November, County Commissioners and Mayor Jacobs agreed to move forward with this potential amendment to the County ordinance and a formal vote is expected to take place in **late February or early March**.

CFHLA believes that changing this ordinance would provide a greater customer service experience to visitors of the region who may wish to enjoy an alcoholic beverage in the morning while watching their favorite sports team play on the other side of the world, especially during events such as the Olympics or World Cup.

LINKS


Below please find news articles, relating to the political interests of the Hospitality Industry:

[Ken Lawson Picked as
Next Head of VISIT FLORIDA](#)

[No Deal as Florida Appeals
Seminole Tribe Blackjack Ruling](#)

[Orange County Resort Tax Up
in November 2016](#)

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