

## MEETING WITH YOUR TEXAS LEGISLATORS

**Preparing for the meeting.** Please read the attached tourism-related position sheets and other attached documents.

**Use This Checklist for your meeting with your legislative officials:** Here is a checklist of items to be covered in the meeting with your legislators' offices in ten easy steps.

1. **Day of Converge: On the Day of Your Meetings with Your Legislative Officials:**
  - **Choose Group/Topic Leaders:** After the Converge briefing, determine group leader/s who will lead on each of the three topics. It can be one person, or you can assign each topic to a different person.
  - **Remove One Copy of Tourism Statistics Sheet from Legislator Packet:** Remove one of the two copies of the tourism statistics for that area from the Legislator Packet to cite the applicable statistics to your state public official/staffer. A volunteer at your table will have your Legislator packet.
2. **Thank the legislator/staffer for his or her time.** Indicate you understand how busy they are and their limited time.
3. **Do self-intros.** Large groups: describe industries present. Small groups: introduce each person and work title.
4. **Thank legislative office for their past support on tourism-related issues** (note any known history with their office).
5. **Give legislator/staff member the Legislator Packet.** Includes information on all of our priorities.
6. **Refer the legislator/staffer to the Tourism Fact Sheet for their legislative district.**
  - The Tourism Fact Sheet contains the dollar impact of tourism in their area. ***Note that the level of tourism within their district may surprise them:***
    - a) Note the **total state taxes** generated yearly from tourism in their area
    - b) Note the **total local taxes** generated yearly from tourism in their area.
    - c) Note the **# of tourism employees** within their area.
    - d) Note that **Texas is the 3<sup>rd</sup> most popular destination** in the US, behind only California and Florida.
    - e) Note that all of this **economic activity and the state taxes it generates is dependent on the state promoting Texas for tourism.**

**Tell legislator how state tourism promotion affects your businesses.**

(e.g.) 1) **value of state marketing campaign, Travel Texas**  
and/or 2) **business increase due to a full summer travel period;**

7. **Refer the legislator/staffer to the sheet on the first priority issue:**

**Support the Current State Law Dedicated Funding for Texas Tourism Promotion in the State Budget.**

- **We are asking for your office's support of the current full dedicated funding for tourism promotion in the state budget bill (SB 1/HB 1)**

**Note the Background: (as covered in the State Budget one pager)**

- **State hotel tax rate:** Texas has a six percent state hotel tax.
- **Majority Use of State Hotel Tax: Eleven-twelfths (11/12<sup>th</sup>) of the 6 percent state hotel tax goes to state general revenue programs** -- to fund public education, health and human services, and all other state programs. (about \$564 million annually)
- **Only 1/12<sup>th</sup> of state hotel tax is dedicated by state law to tourism:** (about \$51 million per yr.)
- **SB 1 / HB 1 (the state budget bill): Currently Allocates the full 1/12<sup>th</sup> dedicated portion of the State hotel tax in the state budget for tourism promotion.**
- **Note the Relationship Between Tourism Promotion and State Economic Activity**
  - This dedicated portion of the state hotel tax has produced economic activity state-wide and a many fold increase in state tax revenues.
- **Note the Importance of Using Dedicated State Funds for their Statutory Dedicated Purpose**
  - The 1/12<sup>th</sup> portion of state hotel tax dedicated to tourism promotion should be spent as dedicated.

**Note the State-wide Economic Numbers (different from numbers you cited for a single legislative district)**

According to data maintained by the Office of the Governor:

- **Spending by Tourists** to Texas is over **\$74.7 billion** annually.
- Tourism directly supports over **677,500 Texas jobs**.
- Tourism generates over **\$4.1 billion** annually in **state tax revenues**.

As Texas continues to rebuild our coastal hit areas **after Hurricane Harvey, it is more important than ever** to continue to promote Texas as a tourism and travel destination.

8. **Refer the legislator/staffer** to the sheet in the Legislator Packet noting our second-high **priority issue: No Expansion of Local Hotel Tax Uses for General Infrastructure**

**The Ask: Please Oppose Any Proposals that Would Expand Uses of the Local Hotel Tax to Include General Infrastructure Items.**

**Dedication of Local Hotel Tax:**

- Local Hotel Tax is statutorily dedicated to **directly promoting tourism, hotel and convention activity.**

**Impact of the Dedicated Local Hotel Tax:**

- **Local Tax Revenue:** Local tourism activity generates **\$2.7 billion in local tax revenues.**
- **Overall Business Impact:** Overnight visitors frequent area **restaurants, retail, attractions, bars and other service businesses**, providing a vital boost to the employment and economic vitality of the area.

**Some Local Governments May Seek to Broaden the Statutes to Allow Use of Local Hotel Tax for General Infrastructure:**

- We expect proposals to use local hotel tax for law enforcement, and other general infrastructure.

- Violates the Statutory Dedication of these funds for Direct Promotions of Tourism.
- Lodging and tourism businesses already pay more than their share of local government costs:
  - Pay substantial property taxes, alcohol taxes, sales taxes, franchise and permit fees, etc.
  - The property taxes, alcohol taxes, and sales taxes generated by lodging and tourism businesses can all be used by the City for any public purpose. Only hotel tax is dedicated in its uses.
- Dedication of local hotel tax ensures local hotel tax funds end up being spent on tourism promotion.
- If a local government has more surplus hotel tax funds than it knows what to do with, it can choose to lower the local hotel tax rate.

**Please oppose any statutory proposals that would broaden the eligible uses of local hotel tax to include general infrastructure items.**

**9. Refer the Legislator/Staffer to our Third Priority Issue: Support State Legislation that Restores a Full Summer for Texas Families and Texas Business Activity**

- **History of Uniform School Start Date Requirements:**
  - **Start Date Law:** In 2006, the Texas Legislature established the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday in August as the statewide uniform start date for Texas schools.
  - **DOI Change:** In 2015, HB 1842 allowed School Districts to apply to be “Districts of Innovation” and to exempt themselves from 67 Education Code Requirements, one of which is the uniform school start date.
    - 75 % of Texas School Districts have declared themselves DOI.
    - For almost all of DOI School Districts,
      - there was no innovation other than simply opting out of a uniform school start date.
      - there are generally no new day or minutes of instruction in the classroom.
      - Simply lots of “leave” days spread out throughout the entire school year.
    - Has created school years that now start as early as the first of August.
    - Economic Impact: Has had a horrible economic impact on all businesses that rely on summer travel activity (hotels, attractions, restaurants, service industry businesses).
      - Each week that school starts earlier costs the state over \$1 billion in economic activity and \$62 million in lost tax revenues.
    - Not School Experts But We Have Not Seen Any Showing of Positive School Impact from Earlier School Start Dates: No evidence that the longer school calendar has had any positive impact on test scores or student performance.

**The Ask: Please support HB 233 (Krause)/SB 673 (Campbell) that would once again require school districts to follow a uniform September to May school year.**

**10. Thank Legislative Office: Close with thanks for the gift of their time and service at the Legislature.**

**Offer our help and support.** Ask how as their constituents, we can best help them this legislative session.

**Final Guidance on Visits:**

**Document legislator comments:** If the legislator/staffer comments on any of our positions, please note this to any of the THLA staff at the Converge or online at [www.CapitolConverge.com](http://www.CapitolConverge.com).

**Don't commit on new issues:** If legislator/staffer asks you to support an issue you are not prepared on, do not commit on the spot. Tell the legislator you will bring the issue to the association's attention and they will get back to him/her.

**Don't argue with a legislator/staffer** about their concern about a position or bill you discuss. Simply thank them for their point and offer to deliver their valued input back to your industry association staff.

**Treat staffers with the same courteous manner as you would the legislator.** Often, gaining the support of a legislator's staff member is essential to winning on an issue. The staff member's notes on your visit often determine how a state legislator will vote. Please know that legislation is frequently handled by staffers who are under 25 years old, and the kindness and respect you show them is returned many-fold in our ability to be effective in the legislative process.

**Follow up after the meeting.** Please **mail/email each legislative office a thank-you letter** after the meeting noting our priority issues.

### **SAMPLE THANK YOU LETTER TO LEGISLATORS / LEGISLATIVE STAFF**

Address the Envelope and Inside Address as follows:

**For a State Senator:**

The Honorable [*first & last name*]  
Texas Senate  
P.O. Box 12068  
Austin, TX 78711

**For a State Representative:**

The Honorable [*first & last name*]  
Texas House of Representatives  
P.O. Box 2910  
Austin, TX 78768

Dear Senator [*last name*] or Representative [*last name*]:

Thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to meet with us on Thursday, February 21st about the legislative priorities of the lodging and tourism industry. It meant a lot to us to have the opportunity to visit with your office. As we indicated in the meeting, we would appreciate your support on the following legislative items:

- **Support the current level of dedicated state funding for tourism promotion in the State Budget.**
- **Oppose any bills expanding the eligible uses of local hotel tax to include general infrastructure items.**
- **Support Bills that Restore Summers for Texas Families and Businesses (HB 233/SB 673).**

*[Insert any personal comments regarding your meeting to help them remember your visit.]*

Thank you again for meeting with [*me/us*]. We look forward to working with you and your staff during the legislative session and afterward when you are back in our district.

Sincerely,  
Participant Name  
Title