



# NORTH CAROLINA TRAVEL AND TOURISM BOARD

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## 2017 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

**FUNDING FOR TOURISM MARKETING AND PROMOTION.** In 2015, domestic travelers spent \$21.9 billion across the state, a record high visitor spending figure. Domestic tourism expenditures directly supported more than 211,000 jobs for North Carolina residents, a record high employment figure. Traveler spending generated \$1.1 billion in state, and \$660 million in local tax revenue. To maintain and expand this vital sector of our economy, the state of North Carolina must invest substantially more in marketing our state to regional, national, and international travelers. Currently, our investment (the advertising and marketing appropriation to the Economic Development Partnership of NC for VisitNC) lags behind that of our competitor states. Tourism creates jobs, promotes economic development, and contributes over \$1.7 billion each year in state and local taxes. Studies show that state investments in tourism advertising and marketing not only repay themselves, but are major net revenue generators for both state and local government. The Board will urge the General Assembly to expand its critical investment in marketing and advertising North Carolina as a destination for business and pleasure travelers.

**LOCAL OCCUPANCY TAX POLICY.** All new and revised local occupancy taxes should be dedicated to the promotion of travel and tourism, which was the original purpose of such taxes. The Board will oppose all new and revised room taxes that fail to meet this standard. The Board supports the uniform enforcement of local occupancy laws in a manner that maintains consistency with the collection by the Department of Revenue of state sales taxes on "gross receipts derived from rentals of rooms and accommodations."

**CONTINUED OVERSIGHT OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP OF NORTH CAROLINA.** The North Carolina Travel & Tourism Board affirms its support for the Travel and Tourism Policy Act as set out in NCGS §143B-434.2, et seq., and specifically the responsibility of the Department of Commerce and the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina to comply with the Act. The Board believes that in order for the duties and responsibilities of the Department to be effectively executed, the tourism division of the Partnership, Visit NC, must be adequately funded and staffed with professionals with knowledge of and experience in the tourism industry. The Board will continue to support the Department and the Partnership's efforts to ensure the tourism industry is effectively promoted and supported.

**OPPOSE OTHER TAXES TARGETED AT TRAVEL AND TOURISM INDUSTRY.** The travel and tourism industry is willing to bear its fair share of the cost of government, but opposes taxes targeted at our industry alone. The Board will continue to oppose taxes, such as admission taxes and meals taxes, that are targeted exclusively at our industry.

**SUPPORT EXISTING SCHOOL CALENDAR LAW.** The Board supports the existing North Carolina law requiring schools to begin in late August, the traditional time for back-to-school. Studies show that starting school in late August produces as much as \$1 billion each year in economic growth through increased tourism-related sales. A majority of states have late August start dates, with no discernable impact on student learning or test scores.

**FILM NC.** Film industry projects in the state provide economic benefits and are key to generating publicity and showcasing North Carolina to potential visitors. The Board supports state policies to attract and revitalize our film industry across the state.

**LEVEL PLAYING FIELD FOR LODGING.** The Board supports legislation to ensure a level playing field for the taxation of short-term rentals facilitated by online companies.

**PROTECT OUR ENVIRONMENT.** The travel and tourism industry depends on the voluntary choices people make to visit North Carolina. Many visitors come here because of our beautiful and clean environment. If we spoil our clean air and water, litter our scenic highways, and allow North Carolina to develop a reputation for environmental neglect, this industry and the hundreds of thousands of North Carolinians who depend on it will suffer. The Board will continue to support initiatives of the General Assembly and the Administration to find prompt and effective remedies for these potential harms to our state.