

## 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. North Carolina ranks sixth in total person-trip volume by state behind California, Florida, Texas, New York, and Pennsylvania.

To maintain and expand this vital sector of our economy, NC 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 - 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 Coalition will urge the General Assembly to expand its critical investment in marketing and advertising NC 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 Coalition will oppose all new and revised room taxes that fail to meet this standard as set forth in the Coalition's Local Occupancy Tax Policy. The Coalition 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." The Coalition will also work on an occupancy tax education plan for Tourism Development Authorities.

**CONTINUED OVERSIGHT OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP OF NORTH CAROLINA.** The Coalition affirms its support for the Travel and Tourism Policy Act (the "Act") as set out in NCGS §143B-434.2, et seq., and specifically the responsibility of the Department of Commerce ("Department") and the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina ("Partnership") to comply with the Act. The Coalition believes that in order for the duties and responsibilities of the Department to be effectively executed the tourism division of the Partnership must be adequately funded and staffed with professionals with knowledge of and experience in the tourism industry. The Coalition will continue with work with the Department and the Partnership 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 we oppose taxes targeted at our industry alone. The Coalition will continue to oppose taxes, such as admission taxes and meals taxes, that are targeted exclusively at our industry.

**OPPOSE DELEGATION OF TAXING AUTHORITY.** The Coalition believes the General Assembly must preserve the state's tax base to meet statewide needs, and must maintain fair and consistent tax policies throughout the state. No new local tax should be imposed without passage by the General Assembly of specific authorizing legislation. The Coalition will oppose legislation that delegates to local government the power to impose taxes on components of the travel and tourism industry without prior legislative authorization.

**OPPOSE PUBLIC FUNDING OF LODGING FACILITIES THAT COMPETE WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR.** The Coalition believes that the public sector should not fund the development of lodging facilities that compete with private sector hotels and lodging facilities.

**SUPPORT CONSUMER PROTECTIONS FOR TICKET RESALES OVER THE INTERNET.** The Coalition supports legislation that protects consumers by regulating the resale of concert and sporting event tickets over the Internet.

**SUPPORT EXISTING SCHOOL CALENDAR LAW.** The Coalition 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.

**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 Coalition 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.

**EXTENSION OF FILM INCENTIVES.** Film industry projects in the state provide economic benefits and help to showcase North Carolina. The Coalition supports state policies to attract and grow our film industry across the state.

**GAME NIGHT LEGISLATION.** The Coalition supports legislation allowing game night-themed events for non-profit organizations.

**ADMISSIONS SALES TAX/TIMING OF REMITTANCE.** The 2013 tax reform legislation moved many venues from a gross receipts tax to a sales tax for admission tickets. This change has resulted in an administrative burden requiring venues to remit the tax at the point of sale versus the traditional method of remitting the tax after an event has occurred. The Coalition supports legislation to clarify the timing of tax remittance to simplify the accounting, audit and administrative burden venues face across our state.

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