

VISIT FLORIDA Reorganization Proposal

The House Select Committee on Government Reorganization released a proposed committee bill (PCB SCGR 11-03) yesterday that would dissolve Florida's tourism promotion agency in favor of a consolidated economic development agency responsible for tourism, economic development and sports marketing. The Senate has a similar bill (SB 2156). Though there are some minor differences both would dissolve VISIT FLORIDA.

The remarkable success and value of VISIT FLORIDA to our industry is significant. For every dollar of public (tax dollar) funding, our industry provides two additional dollars to fund the public/private partnership. Florida's tourism industry demonstrates its support of VISIT FLORIDA by voluntarily and generously participating with our marketing dollars.

But the partnership extends beyond financial investment. The best and brightest marketing minds in the state of Florida contribute their wisdom and experience by volunteering to serve VISIT FLORIDA:

- Fifty-three tourism industry leaders serve on the VISIT FLORIDA Board of Directors.
- 110 industry leaders serve on various VISIT FLORIDA committees and councils.
- Several hundred participate in the VISIT FLORIDA marketing retreat which leads to development of the VISIT FLORIDA marketing plan.
- 9300 tourism businesses in the state of Florida are involved as VISIT FLORIDA partners.
- And near 1 million Floridians are employed by tourism-related businesses, and benefit from the affects of a robust tourism economy.

The proposed bills would roll VISIT FLORIDA into a multi-agency economic development entity led by an 11-member Board of Directors, all appointed by the Governor, Speaker of the House, and Senate President. Under this proposal, only one of the eleven directors is mandated to be a representative from the tourism industry.

While we support a stronger, more robust economic development effort for Florida, our elected representatives fail to recognize the difference between economic development and tourism marketing. While economic development sees job creation as its cause, job creation is the consequence of a vigorous tourism economy.

Under the two legislative proposals (Senate proposal - SB 2156 and House proposal - PCB SCGR 11-03)* VISIT FLORIDA is transformed from a private industry-driven partnership into a government-run partnership. Since its inception in 1996, while the state of Florida has contributed \$350 million in public investment in VISIT FLORIDA, the private sector has invested \$776 million.

Finally, VISIT FLORIDA is a model of how government and private industry can (and should) work together. VISIT FLORIDA is the standard other states aspire to achieve. The USA's own new tourism marketing organization is modeled after VISIT FLORIDA. VISIT FLORIDA was

the first-ever state organization to receive accreditation by the Destination Marketing Association International.

Call To Action

Our message to the Florida Legislature is this: **Maintain VISIT FLORIDA as a separate industry-driven public/private partnership with appropriate funding levels to continue to sustain the nation's premier tourism marketing platform.**

The House Select Committee on Government Reorganization will be meeting **tomorrow, Friday, April 8 at 11:00am**. It is critical that these committee members hear from you **today**.

- Please contact (call and/or email) the members of the House Select Committee on Government Reorganization today. [Click here](#) for the list.
- Contact your elected Florida Senator and Representative (for both your home and your business, if in different districts). Go to www.myfloridahouse.gov/sections/Representatives/myrepresentative to look up your State Representative and State Senator.
- Go viral. Share this message with employees, other tourism-related businesses, anyone interested in maintaining the health and vitality of VISIT FLORIDA. Use your business and personal contact lists and social networking outlets.
- Come to Tallahassee to attend the Committee meeting and speak in opposition of the dissolution of VISIT FLORIDA.

If you have any questions, please contact me (contact info at bottom).

The Florida Trust encourages your active participation with the leadership of your local destination marketing organization (DMO, CVB, TDC) to coordinate with other tourism industry businesses to address this critical issue with your county's Legislative Delegation.

****Special thanks to Robert Skrob (FACVB) and Bill Lupfer (FAA) for assisting with this update.****

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