

NORTH CAROLINA TRAVEL & TOURISM BOARD 2016 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

- **FUNDING FOR TOURISM MARKETING AND PROMOTION.** In 2014, the travel and tourism industry generated more than \$21 billion in direct visitor spending (a 5.4% increase from 2013), and directly accounts for 204,832 jobs. To maintain and expand this vital sector of our economy, 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/VisitNC) lags behind that of our competitor-states. Tourism creates jobs, promotes economic development and contributes more than \$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 support any effort to expand the state's investment in marketing and advertising North Carolina as a destination for business and leisure travelers.
- **LOCAL OCCUPANCY TAX POLICY.** The Board supports the uniform municipal and county administrative provisions for occupancy tax legislation as set out in NCGS §153A-155 and §160A-215, and uniformity in the areas of levy, administration, collection, repeal and penalties; and that such taxes be dedicated to the promotion of travel and tourism, which was the original purpose of said tax policy.
- **THE TRAVEL & TOURISM POLICY ACT.** The Board reaffirms its support of the Travel and Tourism Policy Act as set out in NCGS §143B-434.2, specifically the duties and responsibilities of the Department of Commerce ("Department"), and the Economic Development Partnership of NC ("Partnership") to continue to comply with the Act.
- **TAXES TARGETED AT TRAVEL & TOURISM INDUSTRY.** The Board opposes taxes targeted specifically for the travel and tourism industry alone, including taxes such as admission and meals taxes that are targeted exclusively at the industry.
- **DELEGATION OF TAXING AUTHORITY.** The Board 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 Board opposes legislation that delegates to local government the power to impose taxes on components of the travel and tourism industry without prior legislative authorization.
- **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, citing studies that show starting school in late August produces as much as \$1 billion each year in economic growth through increased tourism-related sales. A majority of other states have late August start dates, with no negative 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 Board will support initiatives of the General Assembly and the Administration to find reasonable and effective remedies for these potential harms to our state.
- **FILM INCENTIVES.** Film industry projects in the state provide economic benefits and help to showcase North Carolina. The Board supports state policies to attract and grow the film industry across the state, and encourages the General Assembly and Administration to fund a competitive sustainable film production grant program that can have a positive impact on the state's economy and film industry. Furthermore, the Board encourages the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina to provide benchmarking and economic impact reporting to members of the Board.