

Dear Escambia County Businesses and Residents,

Tourism is vital to the wellbeing of Escambia County's economy. Florida's tourism market is under attack and Visit Pensacola needs your help to protect this important economic engine.

Recently, the Florida House Regulatory Reform & Economic Development Subcommittee introduced and passed a far-reaching Committee Bill (HB7053) that has been labeled as the most significant attack on Florida's tourism industry ever proposed.

If passed, this bill will negatively impact tourism and tourism-related entities by stripping away both the state and local community's ability to effectively promote its tourist destinations.

We need your help to prevent this bill from becoming a law.

HB7053 will critically hinder, if not destroy, Visit Florida, and negatively impact Escambia County's tourism economy.

Simultaneously, it will negatively impact the county-level Tourism Development Tax (TDT), also known as the "bed tax," funding model, too. HB7053 will require Escambia County to pay 5% of our TDT collections to fund Visit Florida.

In summary, this bill does the following:

1. Rural counties will be required to pay 2% of Tourist Development Tax (TDT) collections and non-rural counties (**Escambia County**) 5% of TDT collections to fund Visit Florida, approximately \$70 million for 2023-26.
2. Requires all County level Tourist Development Taxes levied to be reauthorized by referendum every 6 years exempting TDT collected to cover county bond obligations.
3. Eliminates proceeds from rental car surcharge to Visit Florida.
4. Prohibits any state appropriations to Visit Florida.
5. *Requires Visit Florida to ensure that 75 percent of all expenditures go towards activities, services, functions, and programs that directly assist state parks, state forests, and rural counties.*
6. Requires Visit Florida to match monies from each county on a one-to-one basis while prohibiting any proceeds from TDT to be counted towards the match. Any co-op marketing or local DMO program participation cannot count.
7. *Expands the ability for counties to use TDT for tourism infrastructure for transportation, sanitary sewer, solid waste, drainage, potable water, and pedestrian*

facilities by removing the requirements to use at least 40% of TDT for marketing as well as removing the independent professional analysis demonstrating the positive impact to tourist-related businesses in the county.

8. **The definition of rural counties which would receive 75% of the Visit Florida funding does NOT include Escambia County.**

Last year alone, TDT collections directly provided over \$21 million to Escambia County's economy. Visit Pensacola's tourism marketing efforts brings hundreds of millions of dollars into the county every year, while supporting the largest employment sector: the tourism industry.

Visitors to the Pensacola area save local residents \$630 in local taxes per household each year.

Visit Pensacola needs your help! Passage of this legislation would cripple the tourism growth Escambia County has seen post-Covid and would jeopardize more than 22,000 tourism-industry jobs.

Please consider voicing your opposition to HB7053 by contacting your local and state representatives by telephone or email. We encourage you to not only get involved with defeating this legislation, but share this with other businesses and contacts to assist with opposing this terrible bill, too.

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This bill is bad for Escambia County tourism and bad for Florida, too. Please help us act now.

Thank you for your help.

DARIEN SCHAEFER

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