



## **Library of 2025 Legislative Advocacy Elevator Speech Scripts**

The following is a library of speech scripts that can be used by Destinations Florida members or other tourism industry stakeholders at meetings taking place with legislative members. The scripts cover a number of issues, including the value of local tourism promotion, the need to preserve the current uses of Tourist Development Taxes, the origins/history of Tourist Development Taxes and legislation impacting Tourist Development Taxes. Read aloud, each script is approximately two minutes long. Members can choose to use a speech script that best suits their particular need at the time and/or speech scripts can be spread among different speakers who are planning to address different subject matter at the same meeting or event.

## **SCRIPT 1: LOCAL TOURISM PROMOTION AND TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAXES**

While Visit Florida does an excellent job promoting the State of Florida in general as a travel destination, local communities must do their own travel promotion in order to attract visitors to their particular part of Florida. Each Florida community is unique and has its own unique travel assets. It is up to our local tourism promotion organization to tell our story to potential visitors and explain why this is where in Florida they should plan to come.

As our community's tourism ambassador, [INSERT DMO NAME], promotes our community as an attractive travel destination and packages information potential visitors are looking for about our destination – area sites and attractions, hotels, restaurants and shopping – into one place under one brand. Local tourism promotion organizations also have the know-how to effectively promote their communities.

In [INSERT COUNTY NAME] County, [INSERT DMO NAME] has identified the types of visitors most likely to come here and the markets they are coming from so very targeted marketing and advertising campaigns can be deployed that will bring visitors to the area.

Local tourism promotion is a function that funds itself. Tourist Development Taxes were established to ensure counties would always have a dedicated funding source for local tourism promotion. Residents do not pay these taxes. Instead, they are paid by visitors in order to attract more visitors. They are taxes added to visitors' overnight stays at hotels and vacation rentals.

The Florida Legislature passed a state law that would allow counties to levy Tourist Development Taxes and local voters then approved them through a countywide referendum. It is critical to maintain the current uses of these taxes for local tourism promotion efforts so we can continue to bring jobs and revenue into the county thanks to the visitors we attract here.

## **SCRIPT 2: PRESERVING TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAXES**

Tourist Development Taxes were established for one purpose – to ensure our county had dedicated funding set aside for the tourism promotion efforts necessary to create and sustain jobs in our community and to generate the revenue that pays for critical services residents rely on, such as public safety, education, infrastructure and environmental programs.

These are taxes that are not paid by residents of our community, but instead by visitors to the area. It is essential that we preserve the current permissible uses of Tourist Development Taxes so we can continue to attract the visitors who not only pay for this “seed” money to attract more visitors, but to also reap the benefits of the local sales tax revenue they generate and the jobs they create.

Funding for tourism promotion is critical to the vibrancy of our state and local economies. In 2023, Florida welcomed more than 140.6 million visitors – another record-setting year for Florida tourism. Each of those visitors brought jobs and revenue to our state and local community. In 2022, Florida visitors contributed \$121.5 billion to Florida's economy and supported 2 million Florida jobs.

To maintain these record-breaking results, it is crucial that we support Florida's and our community's tourism promotion efforts by preserving the uses of Tourist Development Taxes.

### **SCRIPT 3: PURPOSE/ORIGINS OF TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAXES**

Tourist Development Taxes were created so there would always be money earmarked for our county to engage in tourism promotion efforts that ultimately bring jobs and local revenue into the community. Sometimes referred to as “bed taxes,” Tourist Development Taxes are collected on any unit rented or leased for six months or less, including hotels and vacation rentals. Here in [INSERT COUNTY NAME] County, overnight guests at these properties pay a [INSERT LOCAL TDT TAX RATE] percent tax per night that is then reinvested into programs to attract more visitors to our community.

The hotel and lodging industry volunteered to have these taxes levied on themselves so there would be a dedicated revenue stream for local tourism promotion with the single purpose of maintaining and growing visitation levels to the area. At the request of Florida hoteliers, the Florida Legislature passed a state law that would allow counties to levy Tourist Development Taxes. Local voters then approved Tourist Development Taxes through a countywide referendum.

Tourist Development Taxes are primarily intended for use on local tourism promotion, construction of tourist-related facilities and beach and shoreline maintenance. None of the tax dollars are distributed to the lodging industry. Your local tourism promotion organization, [INSERT DMO NAME], oversees the use of Tourist Development Taxes with additional oversight from the Board of County Commissioners.

The structure of Tourist Development Taxes is a system that works for Florida. Maintaining the current permissible uses of Tourist Development Taxes – for expenditures related to tourism promotion – stimulates the local economy by enabling us to share why our destination is the right destination for potential visitors around the world.

#### **SCRIPT 4: VALUE OF LOCAL TOURISM PROMOTION**

Local tourism promotion is critical to drawing visitors to our part of Florida. While some visitors, especially international visitors, may think of Florida as only Disney and beaches, our state is not homogenous and has so many different travel offerings. Because each part of Florida is unique, each community needs its own branded tourism promotion.

As our county's tourism promotion organization, it is our job to promote our community as an attractive travel destination and package all the important information potential visitors are looking for about a destination – area sites and attractions, hotels, restaurants and shopping – into one place under one brand. We know our market better than anyone else. We know what makes us unique and what might draw potential visitors to our community.

We also know our visitors. We know what interests them and where they most frequently come from. Our tourism promotion campaigns are targeted directly to the people most interested in our travel assets and to markets from which we typically draw the most visitors. Pulling together resources and ideas from within our own community enables us to target our feeder markets very specifically and attract more tourists to our area.

Local tourism promotion is also vital to local coordination. [INSERT DMO NAME] serves as our community's brand ambassador and we do the work to get everyone within the community on the same team in order to communicate with one voice and one message. Additionally, we offer the businesses in our community, especially our small businesses, promotion expertise, connections and resources they might not otherwise be able to tap into.

Significant jobs and revenue depend on the local tourism promotion we conduct. Without it, our county and our county's tourism-reliant businesses would be at a disadvantage to competing destinations.

## **SCRIPT 5: TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAXES LEGISLATION**

Tourist Development Taxes were approved by voters to ensure there would always be money set aside for a county to conduct tourism promotion efforts, which is essential to attracting visitors who spend money in our community, generate tax revenue, and create jobs for our residents.

Despite there being clearly outlined uses for Tourist Development Taxes, every year, a bill is filed in the Florida Legislature that would sweep Tourist Development Taxes away from permissible uses and redeploy those funds to other uses.

There are 62 counties in Florida that levy and collect Tourist Development Taxes, including [INSERT COUNTY NAME] County. Many people don't realize that while the primary purpose of Tourist Development Taxes is to fund local tourism promotion, Tourist Development Taxes are also used to fund public facilities, convention centers and environmental projects.

In recent years, there has been an increase in collections of Tourist Development Taxes, which makes these funds an attractive funding source for other budget items. Any legislation that would siphon more away from the percentage that goes directly to local tourism promotion, even for good causes such as water quality improvement projects, will hurt our county's ability to bring in the visitors who help fund our local economy and create jobs.

Tourist Development Taxes are a model that is working, and working well, for Florida. Not only are Florida counties able to recoup the costs of tourism promotion from visitors to the area, but they are also able to fund projects that strengthen their communities and provide benefits to the people who live there.