

Tourism Development Alliance of Georgia

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an affiliate of the
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GACVB

Albany, GA

February 11, 2007

Tourism Day at the Capitol

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Tourism Day at the Capitol

Highlights

- Press Conference with the Governor
- Presentation of the Big Check
- Joint Resolution Recognizing the Tourism Industry
- Thanks for Keeping GA On Your Mind
 - GACVB Directories
 - Travel Guide
 - Tour De Georgia Calendar
 - TDAG Policy Priorities
- Interviews with Elected Officials on Tourism Policy
- Trade Show on Tourism Programs

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Policy Priorities

1) Clarify the language in the Georgia code that covers the acceptable uses of the Georgia Hotel/Motel Tax

• **HB 302 – by Reps Mumford, Mangham & Stephenson-** This bill amends Paragraph 3.7 by changing the 6% tax rate to 8%

• **HB 374 – by Reps James Mills, Ron Stephens, Butch Parrish & Jay Shaw-** This bill, advocated by TDAG moves all the hotel motel tax definitions to the front of the code section

• **Comprehensive Tax Reform Study Committee**

• **Education Forums for GACVB, ACCG, GMA, GACCE, GEDA**

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Potential Changes for 2008

- What Organizations should qualify
- Definition of either a CVB or DMO
- Policy for Bonded Indebtedness
- Qualifying Capital Investment Projects
- 50% required for tourism promotion
- Require entire county delegation to sign legislation

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Hotel Tax Lawsuits

- **Class Action Filed by the City of Rome and Floyd County still in process**
- **Separate lawsuit filed by the city of Atlanta was thrown out by the judge in December. Judge Johnson dismissed the city of Atlanta's lawsuit based on the plaintiff's failure to pursue administrative avenues for collecting the disputed tax prior to going to court.**

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Policy Priorities

2) Increase funding, from \$5 million to \$15 Million, for the tourism division of the Georgia Department of Economic Development to advertise, market and promote Georgia as a tourist destination

- \$5 million in FY-07 for Sesquicentennial Commemoration
- A research position for the Tourism Division in FY-08
- A fundraiser position for the Tourism Foundation in FY-08
- Go Fish - \$ 13 million in FY-07 and \$6 million in FY-08

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Policy Priorities

3) Comprehensive Study of the School Calendar and its impact on education, family environments, work force development, tourism and the economy

•HB 262 – by Reps Chuck Martin & Ron Stephens – the Flexibility for Excellence in Education Act – this bill would allow local school board to opt for a 170 day school calendar

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Policy Priorities

4) Integration of Georgia's tourism product development into the state's overall economic development strategy

- **HB 148** - State sales and use tax; aquariums; provide exemption

- With over 3 million visitors since opening in November of 2005, the Georgia Aquarium is already expanding their facilities. **Rep. Mark Burkhalter** has introduced this bill to allow the aquarium an exemption on sales tax for construction materials.

- **HB 162** - Sales and use tax; performing arts amphitheater facilities; provide exemption

- This bill, also sponsored by **Rep. Burkhalter** provides a sales tax exemption for performing arts centers that begin construction after July 1, 2007 and have costs in excess of \$30 million, more than 60,000 square feet of space and associated facilities, including, but not limited to, parking.

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Other Bills of Interest

HB 159 & SB 56 - Wine; state license requirements; direct shipment to Ga. residents; provisions

- This bill was introduced by Rep. Wendell Willard in the House and Senator Renee Unterman in the Senate. It would allow any licensed winery, wholesaler or retailer to ship up to 24 cases of wine per Georgia resident per year.

HB 169 - Sales and use tax; certain prepared food and beverage donations; provide exemption

- Under Georgia law, if a restaurant donates food to charity, they are required to pay sales tax at the full retail value. This bill would exempt those donations from sales tax.

Winegrowers Association of Georgia bill has not yet been introduced

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Other Bills of Interest

HB 214 - Jekyll Island - State Park Authority; renewal of property lease; provisions

- There has been much passionate debate over the years regarding the future of Jekyll Island. There is a definite need for investment in the convention center and redevelopment of some of the existing hotels. Any changes at Jekyll must also be consistent with the mission of preserving this great natural resource. HB 214 extends the lease for another 99 years. It also provides for the creation of a legislative oversight committee.

SB 55 - Alcoholic Beverages; resealed partially consumed bottle of wine; uniform rules of the road

- This bill sponsored by Senator Unterman would allow you to brown bag a partially consumed bottle of wine from a restaurant. This bill was introduced last year by Rep. Bob Smith. It passed the House and Senate, but was vetoed by the Governor due to concerns regarding federal transportation laws.

HR 195 - Hospitality Highway; dedicate GA 400

- This bill by Reps Amerson, Burkhalter, Jones, Hamilton, Knox & Willard is due to the great cooperative effort of Dahlonega, Dawsonville, Forsyth, Alpharetta, Roswell & Sandy Springs

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What Can You Do To Help?

With elected officials

- Support them where they live: contribute time and resources
- Support Committee Research Tours
- Attend Committee Meetings, Board Meetings
- Invite them to tourism events or just a cup of coffee
- Be a resource
- Be an ally
- When you need assistance
 - Joy Walstrum
 - 404-358-5634
 - joy@tourismdevelopmentalliance.org

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