

NFH&LA
NORTH FLORIDA HOTEL & LODGING ASSOCIATION
External Affairs Bulletin

May 2011

5/9 NFHLA External Affairs: Jacksonville Mayoral Race

Distributed to: ALL members, hotel and allied

The North Florida Hotel & Lodging Association sent a questionnaire, for a third time, to the Jacksonville Mayoral candidates, [Alvin Brown](#) and [Mike Hogan](#).

We only received a response from Alvin Brown, which is below. We encourage you to read his response. Jacksonville.com has a section dedicated to the Mayoral Race, we encourage you to review, news.jacksonville.com/specials/mayorsrace/

Please share this information with your staff and we encourage everyone to make their voice heard and vote in the May 17 election. Early voting is currently open, for a listing of locations, visit www.duval elections.com.

NFHLA Questionnaire responses from Alvin Brown

With travel and tourism being one of the largest tax base industries in the county, what is your stance on the funding model of the CVB for Duval County? What would you do to assist Visit Jacksonville in obtaining more funding? Are you aware that within our competitive cities we have the smallest funding amongst the group?

When looking at the funding model of the CVB there are a number of issues to consider. First, what are the funding models of other cities? We need to identify best practices from around the country to compare with our program to see how we match up and, more importantly, how we can improve what we're doing. Second, does the current model enable Jacksonville and the Beaches to be competitive in today's market? Third, does it help Jacksonville and the Beaches attract visitors? I'm open to changes in this model if it helps Jacksonville grow its tourism industry, produces more jobs and moves the city closer to becoming a destination and not a pass through.

With travel and tourism being a competitive arena and Jacksonville having an uncompetitive convention center, what would be your support level for a new convention center? Advocate or not?

Our city needs a new, state-of-the-art convention center downtown to be competitive with other cities our size and to help revitalize downtown. I am a strong advocate for downtown. I want to make our downtown a destination, not a pass through. I intend to bring jobs back to downtown. We need to recruit small businesses and major corporations downtown. My goal is to make downtown Jacksonville a place where young people want to live, work and visit, a place that is vibrant, with a lively entertainment district, the arts, a state-of-the theater and housing. Government can't act alone to make these great things happen. We will have to develop public-private partnerships to build a new convention center and to ensure that it and any other downtown projects will be sustainable.

What is your position on the cruise terminal and the current proposed location?

I support construction of a cruise terminal. It is important to the development of our port, and it will help Jacksonville become a destination for tourists. As for the location of the terminal, any decision needs to take into consideration the concerns of the residents and all other stakeholders.


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5/9 NFHLA External Affairs: Florida Minimum Wage increase

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Effective June 1, 2011, the Florida minimum wage will increase to **\$7.31** per hour. With this increase, Florida will once again exceed the federal minimum wage, and employers operating within the State will be required to comply with the higher standard. Also effective on June 1, 2011, those “tipped employees” in Florida who otherwise meet eligibility requirements for the tip credit under the federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) will have to be paid a direct cash wage of at least \$4.29 per hour. This is an amount equal to the new Florida minimum of \$7.31 per hour, minus the \$3.02 hourly tip credit permitted under Florida law (assuming that these employees receive enough in tips to generate this credit).

Florida’s minimum wage typically increases at the beginning of a calendar year. However, this particular increase is the result of a successful legal challenge to the formula used by AWI in calculating the Florida minimum wage for 2010 and 2011. AWI has since issued a revised 2011 “Notice to Employees” poster that Florida employers will be required to post, as of June 1, 2011, in a conspicuous and accessible place within each establishment where employees are employed. The poster is now available for downloading in English and Spanish from the [Agency for Workforce Innovation’s webpage](#). It is important to note that this poster is in addition to the federal minimum wage poster, rather than serving as a substitute for it. The federal poster remains available from the [U.S. Department of Labor website](#).

5/9 NFHLA External Affairs: Onerous Florida bill defeated

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A message from the American Hotel & Lodging Association.

After one of the most contentious legislative battles this year, the Florida Senate defeated legislation – SB 376, also referred to as the “Expedia Bill” – that would have granted out-of-state online travel companies (OTCs) like Expedia, Orbitz, and Travelocity a tax and market advantage over Florida hotels.

The legislation was so brazen and unfair, it prompted the St. Petersburg Times to state that “online carpetbaggers fleece Florida” and that the “bill legalizes travel sites’ tax evasion.” Out-of-state OTCs flooded Tallahassee with millions of dollars and hired an untold number of lobbyists to secure passage of the bill that would allow them to continue remitting tax only on their wholesale cost of a room and keep the balance, rather than remitting the tax on the retail price they collect from their customers. Although the Florida House of Representatives approved the bill, the Senate listened to local hoteliers and blocked its passage.

5/12 NFHLA External Affairs: Duval County Tourist Development Council (TDC) meeting next Thursday May 19

Distributed to: ALL members, hotel and allied

We encourage you to attend and support the tourism industry at this very important TDC Quarterly meeting next week. Visit Jacksonville will be asking for additional funding for marketing and sales programs to maintain the momentum of increasing occupancy and drive more business.

Duval County Tourist Development Council meeting
Thursday, May 19, 2011, at 10:00 a.m.
At City Hall at the St. James Building, 117 W. Duval Street,
Conference Room A, Fourth Floor, Suite 425

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5/13 NFHLA External Affairs: VISIT FLORIDA reorganization update

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A message from VISIT FLORIDA. As our industry watched this legislative session very closely as policy related to restructuring the state's economic development function was introduced to make Florida the job creation model for the nation, I would like report on the results of the 2011 Session of the Florida Legislature. A reorganization of public/private partnerships, including VISIT FLORIDA, was initiated by Governor Rick Scott and shaped by the legislative leadership in both the Senate and House.

By unanimous resolution Friday, April 8, the VISIT FLORIDA board of directors respectfully requested "VISIT FLORIDA retain its current industry-lead governance fostering broad based industry support and engagement as an autonomous public/private partnership with a dedicated funding source and a strategically aligned contractual relationship to the newly created public/private partnership." I am pleased to share in large part these requests were acknowledged and incorporated into the passed legislation.

The new legislation creates a new public/private partnership at the state level. It includes a newly created Department of Economic Opportunity on the public side linked to Enterprise Florida, Inc. on the private side of the partnership. The Florida Tourism Marketing Corporation d.b.a. VISIT FLORIDA has been preserved as a direct support organization contracted with Enterprise Florida, Inc. for tourism marketing on behalf of the State of Florida.

As it relates to appropriations, though our dedicated trust fund has been rolled up into a super fund within the new department, designated funding totaling \$34,899,209 was appropriated for VISIT FLORIDA. This is an \$8,251,248 and 31% increase over FY 2010-11 in a budget year with a \$4 billion shortfall. This is significant recognition by both the executive and legislative branches of the ongoing return on investment our cooperative destination marketing platforms generate and our ability to put Floridians back to work.

5/16 NFHLA External Affairs: Update: Duval County Tourist Development Council (TDC) meeting 5-19

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We encourage you to attend and support the tourism industry at this very important TDC Quarterly meeting **this Thursday**. Visit Jacksonville will be asking for additional funding for marketing and sales programs to maintain the momentum of increasing occupancy and drive more business.

Attached you will find taking points with detailed information on the midyear funding request. For more information on this request contact Dan O'Byrne at Visit Jacksonville (904) 421-9150. We encourage to you to attend the meeting on Thursday to show your support!

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Monthly Meeting

The June NFHLA meeting is scheduled for Monday, June 20 and will be held at the Ramada Conference Center Mandarin, from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Duval County City Council President and incoming Duval County Tourist Development Council Chair, Councilmember Stephen Joost will give an update on City Council.

For more information and to make a reservation please visit the Web site,
<http://www.northfloridalodging.com/next-meeting.php>



Featured Allied Member of the Month:
St. Augustine Premium Outlets

St. Augustine Premium Outlets is conveniently located 30 minutes south of Jacksonville on the west side of I-95 at Exit 318. Our Center is a shopper's paradise with an exciting collection of 85 outlets from the world's leading designers and brand names including Banana Republic, Brooks Brothers, Calvin Klein, Coach, DKNY, Gap Outlet, J.Crew, Nike, Polo Ralph Lauren, Tommy Bahama, Tommy Hilfiger, Under Armour and many more. Each store offers tremendous selections at savings of 25% to 65% every day.

St. Augustine Premium Outlets® is owned and operated by Premium Outlets®, the world's largest collection of upscale outlet centers. The portfolio includes 69 Premium Outlet Centers® including 57 in the United States, one in Puerto Rico, eight in Japan, two in Korea and one in Mexico, as well as additional outlet centers, for a total of 83 properties. Premium Outlets is the outlet division of Simon Property Group.

More information at www.premiumoutlets.com/staugustine

