



**2017 STATE
LEGISLATIVE AGENDA
85TH TEXAS LEGISLATURE**

Legislative Priorities and Endorsements

Visit San Antonio (VSA) will continue to actively support its travel and tourism partners, including Texas Travel Industry Association (TTIA) and the Texas Hotel and Lodging Association (THLA) and their legislative agendas that support the mission and vision of VSA. Specifically, Visit San Antonio's Advocacy priorities are:

- ◆ Preserve full funding for state tourism promotion
- ◆ Maintain the school start date law
- ◆ Protect the Event Trust Funds and Major Events Trust Fund
- ◆ Support comprehensive transportation infrastructure planning and travel-related programs
- ◆ Support the continued state investment in the Alamo
- ◆ Support the continued viability of San Antonio to compete for major sports events and conventions

Visit San Antonio opposes any legislation that:

- ◆ Instills unfair taxes and unreasonable regulations on the San Antonio and Texas travel industry
- ◆ Does not reflect the welcoming and diverse nature of the City of San Antonio and the State of Texas
- ◆ Endangers the ability of San Antonio to attract major sporting events and conventions

Funding for Texas Tourism

San Antonio continues to rank as one of the most popular domestic travel destinations with 2015 welcoming an estimated 29.7 million visitors to Bexar County, including 18.2 million overnight visitors. This critical industry contributes \$195 million to the city in fees and taxes and a total of \$375 million to all local governments combined.

Hospitality and Tourism continues to remain one of the region's top industries, employing nearly one in every eight workers (approximately 130,796 individuals) in San Antonio. The industry size has quadrupled since 1990 and the overall economic impact has increased 50% since 2005.

Visit San Antonio supports TTIA's legislative agenda to preserve full-funding for the Texas Tourism office within the Office of the Governor, Economic Development and Tourism Division.

As outlined by TTIA, independent research shows that for every \$1 spent on state tourism advertising, more than \$7.70 is returned in state tax revenues. This level of return will continue only if the state continues to fully fund its tourism promotion program.

A key contributor to the economic power of the San Antonio and overall Texas travel industry is the tourism promotion program within the Governor's Division of Economic Development and Tourism. The program markets Texas as a domestic and international travel destination. Virtually every Texas community, including San Antonio, depends on the promotional efforts of the state's tourism program to generate out-of-state visitors to Texas, providing jobs, tax revenues and economic impact throughout the state.

State tourism promotion is a self-funded program with a dedicated funding source. By statute, funding for the program comes from only 1/12th (in 2015 approximately \$45 million) of the state's six percent hotel occupancy tax. The remaining portions (in 2015 approximately \$500 million) help fund all other state programs, such as public education, health and human services, etc.



Visit San Antonio will partner with TTIA to ensure its legislators understand and appreciate that full funding for tourism promotion generates significant economic impact for our state and city, including jobs for our citizens and critical tax revenues that San Antonio cannot afford to do without.

School Start Date

State law provides for a uniform school start date of the fourth Monday in August as the day when schools may begin their school year instruction. Visit San Antonio will partner with various associations including TTIA and will continue to work to preserve the current school start date law.

As summarized by TTIA, education groups continue to work with legislators to change current law and/or seek exemptions or waivers from the law under the reasoning that the law takes away local control, especially in terms of setting a school year calendar.

There could also be efforts to extend the school year well beyond Memorial Day, perhaps as much as two or more weeks into June, effectively negating the three additional weeks gained as a result of the current fourth Monday in August start date law.

The current law, which took effect with the beginning of the 2007-2008 school year, restored approximately three weeks to the summer vacation period that had been lost when many schools were starting their school years earlier and earlier, some as early as the first week in August.

Visit San Antonio will continue to partner with TTIA to pro-actively seek to eliminate exemptions and waivers from the school start date, as well as seek to have school instruction begin post-Labor Day and finish instruction pre-Memorial Day; and to ensure legislators understand the current law continues to save the state millions of dollars in tax revenues by reducing expensive utility costs while also generating additional millions of dollars in new tax revenues that can be used to help fund public education and other state government services in Texas.

Event Trust Fund Programs

Hosting events that draw nationwide and worldwide attention benefits San Antonio and the community as a whole. Visit San Antonio continues to support legislation that fully preserves Event Trust Funds programs. As highlighted by TTIA, these programs continue to serve as powerful economic incentives for our city and state to entice travel-related business.

As a result of SB 633 during the 84th Regular Session, oversight of the program shifted from the Texas Comptroller's Office to the Governor's Office of Economic Development and Tourism. Given the significance in the change in oversight, Visit San Antonio and TTIA support SB 633 and the subsequent proposed rules to administer the funds. Additionally, Visit San Antonio supports efforts to include additional events for eligibility under these programs.

Travel and Tourism Programs

Visit San Antonio continues to support programs that enhance travel and tourism related programs, including sustainable funding for Texas Parks and Wildlife Department allowing these parks to be effectively managed, maintained and promoted, including efforts that allow travelers to continue enjoy Texas rivers and waterways.

Additionally, the Texas Historical Commissions Heritage Preservation and Heritage Travel programs are significant travel and economic development assets not only to San Antonio but also communities across the state. Visit San Antonio will continue to partner with TTIA to support THC's efforts to seek viable, alternative funding models, while working to support state funding that ensures the sustainability of their heritage preservation and heritage travel programs.



Further, Visit San Antonio will continue to partner with TTIA to support funding for Texas Commission on the Arts programs that provide important tourism and economic development assistance through its grants program that support art organizations, as well as its cultural districts designations which help develop cultural tourism assets throughout the state.

Transportation

Visit San Antonio supports efforts to require better coordination with state agencies to ensure road closures do not occur during local festivals and other events held to attract tourists and visitors. Additionally, Visit San Antonio will partner with TTIA to encourage enhanced coordination of road closures during traditionally heavy travel periods, including but not limited to major state and federal holidays, school holidays, as well as during periods of high commercial activity (e.g. sales tax weekend).

Visit San Antonio continues to support TxDot's Travel Information Division and their travel-related services and activities. These important efforts include: production and distribution of travel literature, including consumer fulfillment and management of leads generated by the tourism advertising efforts of the Governor's Economic Development and Tourism Division, operation of 12 Travel Information Centers, Drive Texas and Texas Highways Magazine.

Alamo

Visit San Antonio partners with the City of San Antonio, The State of Texas General Land Office and the private Alamo Endowment and their Cooperative Agreement to Reimagine the Alamo and its new master plan for the mission and its surrounding acres. Additionally, Visit San Antonio supports continued investment in the Alamo with local and private funding.

Regulatory Burden, Economic Competitiveness

Visit San Antonio will align its agenda with partner groups and organizations, monitoring legislation to ensure that bills which impose unfair taxes, unreasonable regulations or disruptive policies on the overall Hospitality and Tourism Industry are not implemented.

Further, Visit San Antonio will partner with the City to oppose legislation that risks the viability of San Antonio to attract business and compete for major sporting events and conventions that grow the local and state economy, and oppose any legislation that does not reflect the city and state's welcoming and diverse environment.