



Library of 2023 Local Delegation Meeting Elevator Speech Scripts

The following is a library of speech scripts that can be used at local delegation meetings by Destinations Florida members or other tourism industry stakeholders. 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, and the origins of Tourist Development Taxes. Read aloud, each script is nearly 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 local delegation meeting.

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. And, they share their expertise, resources and connections with tourism-reliant businesses throughout our community.

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 more important now than ever before. Florida was one of the first destinations to open for business as the threat of the pandemic diminished and we were among the first to welcome visitors back. Through strong local and state tourism promotion efforts Florida received nearly 118 million domestic visitors in 2021 – the highest level in state history. A record 36 million people visited Florida in the first quarter of this year. Each of those visitors brought jobs and revenue to our state and local community.

Tourism was at the forefront of Florida’s post-pandemic economic recovery. Now, as we face the aftermath of Hurricane Ian, which has hit the tourism and hospitality industries particularly hard, it is crucial that we support Florida’s and our community’s tourism promotion efforts by preserving the uses of Tourist Development Taxes. By supporting tourism and tourism promotion, we can once again begin the process of economic recovery and put our residents back to work.

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, with 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.