

21 Sanford Rd.  
Woodbury, CT  
February 20, 2013

Dear Appropriations Committee,

The Governor's proposed budget (HB6350, HB 6354) would eliminate any funding for regional tourism as well as the three regional tourism bureaus, a travesty in my opinion. With good reason, the legislature created the regional tourism system such that all towns have some say in what happens in their vicinity. Having regional boards with local representation also creates a pool of interested volunteers who know the area and have a direct interest in working to promote it. In my town alone, regional tourism has been instrumental in presenting the annual Civil War reenactment and in establishing the CT Antiques Trail. My regional tourism district has cultivated relationships with local businesses that have yielded positive public/private products such as the *Unwind* brochure that promotes western Connecticut's attractions and destinations. While my experience is limited to the western part of the state, I know that similar positive results have come from the regional tourism systems in the central and eastern districts as well. The investment in regional tourism has been relatively small and has produced far more in revenue and jobs for the state.

These significant advantages of regional tourism were measured in a 2000 UCONN study. Even then the message was glowing, and who is to say that it has changed? Indeed, thirteen years later how much impact did regional tourism have on the figures reported this year by the central tourism arm of DECD? Is it worth dumping *all* regional tourism to find out?

Speaking of the central tourism arm of the DECD, it would appear that HB 6350 and 6354 are an attempt to consolidate all tourism resources and activities under one roof in Hartford. That would make us one of only two states that has such an operation, a testament to its ineffectiveness. Indeed, the central authority and regional districts can and should co-exist in a symbiotic relationship in which the former gets the lion's share of resources and tends to "macro tourism" while the latter receive less resources to meet the "micro tourism" needs of the state. It might even be revealing to discover the ratio of expenditure vs. benefits generated by regional tourism as opposed to the same ratio for the central Council on Culture and Tourism.

Tourism is an important leg of the Connecticut economy, and experience has shown that regional tourism has been an important leg of Connecticut tourism. It would be foolhardy to eradicate it. Please recognize this by maintaining the three tourism regions and apportioning a reasonable share of tourism dollars to each.

Sincerely,

William A. Monti  
Woodbury Representative and Secretary, Western CTCVB

Cc: Senator Kane, Representative Miner