

Connecticut Faces Difficult Choices

The trustees and staff of The Mark Twain House & Museum clearly recognize that the Governor and the General Assembly must make difficult choices to fund needed programs and services. Our state's fiscal crisis is real and there are many individuals and groups, which rely upon state services, in many instances for vital housing, medical, and nutritional support. In making the difficult decisions about what level of support to provide for competing critical needs, however, we urge that appropriate regard be given to funding state cultural attractions that provide a good return on General Fund investments. The Mark Twain House and Museum is one such attraction.

The Mark Twain House Has Been the Beneficiary of State Funding

Over the years, the Governor's proposed budget and legislative appropriations have provided a steady stream of funds to The Mark Twain House. In FY15, The Harriet Beecher Stowe House and The Mark Twain House equally shared a \$98,890 appropriation as part of the Department of Economic & Community Development appropriation.

Connecticut Has Wisely Invested in the Mark Twain House

Scarce State resources should be leveraged to the maximum amount possible and provide a return on the State's investment. The Mark Twain House continues to be an anchor and stimulus for Connecticut and Greater Hartford tourism and economic development. A year ago, we established an extremely ambitious goal to increase visitors to 95,000 and admission revenue to \$1 million by 50% in three years. We are well on our way having increased visitors by 6% and revenue by 15% last year. We have as many visitors from outside Connecticut as we have in Connecticut. Visitors come to the House from all 50 states and dozens of countries. According to the most recent study of visitors to Connecticut attractions (Vision Visitor Intercept Study, 2008), visitors to the Mark Twain House spend an average of \$500 each throughout the State in hotels, restaurants and retail establishments. Our 63,628 admission visitors alone last year spent over \$31,000,000 and brought Connecticut significant taxes.

Our Program Expansion Has Provided Further Economic Benefits

Several years ago, the Board of Trustees determined to expand our program offerings to supplement House admissions. In 2014, we held over 150 programs in our Visitor Center, ranging from writing and educational workshops, book launches, theatrical shows, and free events for the community. These attracted approximately 20,000 additional patrons who also spent money in the area. While we have become a thriving community presence, we have also reached out beyond our campus. In the last 2 years alone, we have filled the Bushnell Performing Arts Center with appearances by Stephen King and Hal Holbrook. Attendees came from across the country for these rare appearances. The Mark Twain House has also partnered with the Schubert Theater, Yale University, St. Joseph University, The Hartford Stage Company and others to bring theatrical events and award-winning authors for our benefit, but which also provides economic dividends to Connecticut. Recent best-selling authors have included David Baldacci, John Grisham, Ann Rice, Dan Brown, Jodi Picoult and Scott Turow.

Our Success and the Expansion of our Brand Assists Connecticut Tourism

As the Mark Twain House extends its footprint nationally and increases visitors from throughout the U.S. and the world, we benefit other tourism venues. The Mark Twain House continues to receive positive coverage in high circulation media outlets, such as *The New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Los Angeles Times* and others. When the *Wall Street Journal* celebrated its 125 years of

publication last year, it created a collectors' edition featuring stories of 1889. Mark Twain was on the first page. When *National Geographic* selected the top 10 historic homes in the world, The Mark Twain House was listed as one of only 3 in the U.S. *Time* magazine is publishing a commemorative edition on Mark Twain in the next few weeks and the House will be prominently featured with *Time* referring to it as "Downton Abbey's American Cousin." Lastly, the Mark Twain Commemorative Coin will be minted and sold next year. Our Connecticut Congressional Delegation was instrumental in securing this legislation in 2012.

Continuation of Funding Will Continue to Pay Dividends

Connecticut has no choice but to fund organizations that provide dividends. The continuation of our \$49,445 appropriation will enable The Mark Twain House & Museum to maintain staff levels, which increase tourism and promote economic development in Greater Hartford and Connecticut.

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"One of the ten best historic homes in the world!" – *National Geographic*