

# Don't Deflate our Tourism Football

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February 27, 2015

Good Morning Ladies and Gentlemen,

My name is Bill Brown. I am The Director of Sales and Marketing for The Groton Inn and Suites and The Days Inn both located here in Groton. I also serve on The Executive Board of The Connecticut Lodging Association as well as the Steering Committee of The Groton Business Association.

I write to you today as one of many members of the tourism community who will be deeply impacted in a negative way by the proposed cuts outlined in Governor Malloy's Budget presentation of this prior week.

I was in the audience at The Connecticut Lodging Association's annual meeting back in late October where the Governor was the featured speaker and in his remarks commented on how tourism dollar appropriations should be a priority in the upcoming months and years ahead . I am deeply troubled that he has reversed his position so quickly.

Some factors that should be considered:

1. Probably the biggest impact to the bottom line would be tax revenues generated by all attractions and lodging establishments impacted by these cuts. To think a savings of what works out to be about 30% could result in tax revenue deficits that would potentially double or even triple that amount due to lack of marketing representation.
2. These proposed cuts would only enhance and better position neighboring states in their quest to become the "new" center of the gaming world and prohibit our 2 casinos from better positioning themselves competitively.
3. A very troubling result of these cuts would be the closure of the Eastern Regional Tourism District. They have represented my property as well as the balance of attractions and lodging facilities to both national and international travelers coming to Southeastern Connecticut and beyond. . This office will no longer represent those of us that cannot afford to represent ourselves at national tradeshows, literature dispensing and other marketing mechanisms able to allow our business to grow and succeed.
4. Does family and small business relocation to area work venues such as Pfizer, CURE, Electric Boat, Sub Base and other facilities become restrictive options due to cutbacks members of our tourism community will have to make to accommodate these budget shortfalls ?
5. What happened to the lodging tax dollars that went from 12% to 15% back in 2011. Where are these dollars applicable to in this format?
6. One must realize that passing this budget as proposed will set back the marketability and advocacy of pending new projects such as Thames Heritage Park ,and the proposed Coast Guard Museum and better market positioning of attractions that are close by or affiliated with each.: Fort Trumbull, Fort Griswold, Avery Copp House ,Maritime Museum just to name a few.

Tourism has to be recognized as a dominant force in the viability of not just those of us here in Southeast Connecticut but the entire state. Tourists have to see this state and all its offerings as a destination not as a “pass through” to other prominent cities and regions throughout New England and beyond. You can and will have a great impact on how this state is recognized moving forward. While other states in the region are taking giant progressive steps forward, I am hopeful that it is your wish to allow the multi diverse regions of Connecticut to do the same. Maintain level funding for tourism so that Connecticut can truly be recognized as a progressive state in large part due to your efforts.

Respectfully

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