

My name is Kimberly Beal and I am the Tourism Outreach Coordinator at The Mark Twain House & Museum. The Mark Twain House was recently named “one of the ten best historic homes in the world” by *National Geographic*. My job is to make The Mark Twain House as recognizable a name as the two other U.S. sites that made this top ten list; Mount Vernon and Monticello.

The first step in doing this, is putting Mark Twain’s name on the Connecticut map. As I work to build our attendance, I talk to people from around the country and the globe. Everyone knows who Mark Twain is, but many are amazed to find out that not only did Twain live in Connecticut, he lived here for his happiest most productive years and produced his best known works during this time, including *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court*. The state’s efforts at establishing a Connecticut brand are critical to organizations like The Mark Twain House & Museum. We are a world class organization and a jewel of a beautiful state and we need the state’s support and leadership to become as iconic as Twain himself.

I just returned from two major industry trade shows, American Bus Association (ABA) Marketplace and National Tour Association (NTA) Travel Exchange. The State of Connecticut was better represented at these shows than any other New England state, with booths that showcased our Still Revolutionary brand and appointments that generated valuable leads for driving tourism to Connecticut. I have worked closely with my Regional Office and together we are gaining recognition in the tourism industry. For example, this year, The Mark Twain House began working with a Boston company that regularly brings inbound Chinese tourists to our site, and there is every reason to believe that we will continue to attract this growing market and offer them more than a “drive through” experience in our state. We can and will be competitive as a tourism destination if we have the tenacity and conviction to continue our commitment to tourism as an important source of jobs and revenue.

It is my opinion that the DECD statewide marketing funding and the Regional Tourism District funding should be restored to the 2015 session budget plan. I thank you for your support and your consideration.

Sincerely,

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