

2017 Legislative

Roundtable Breakfast

Capital Region
February 10, 2017

co-sponsored by:



Capital Region Legislative Roundtable Breakfast

February 10, 2017

Albany Marriott

8:30 - 10:00 a.m.

Program

Introduction of State & Local Leaders

Presentation of State Issues

Mark, President, NYS Hospitality & Tourism Association

Presentation of Regional Issues

Michele Vennard, President and CEO, Albany County Convention & Visitors Bureau

Todd Garofano, President, Saratoga Convention & Tourism Bureau

Christine Golden, Assistant for Government Relations, Rensselaer County Tourism

New York State Hospitality & Tourism Association

The New York State Hospitality & Tourism Association (NYSH&TA) is a not-for-profit trade organization representing nearly 1,000 lodging properties, totaling over 122,000 guest rooms. The Association provides: **representation and advocacy** on behalf of the industry before state lawmakers and regulatory agencies; **resources** in the form of money-saving programs, networking opportunities and marketing exposure via the website; **educational offerings** that help members best serve their customers.

Statewide Issues

Short-term Rentals

NYSH&TA is working toward the introduction of legislation that would prohibit short-term rentals in New York. Airbnb operates short-term rental units that are largely unregulated in terms of both taxes and safety measures throughout New York. Airbnb has recently entered into tax agreements with two counties to collect and remit occupancy taxes on behalf of its hosts.

The tax agreements are merely an effort by Airbnb to legitimize their model within New York, and do not address the problems at the heart of the short-term rental issue. They do not address safety concerns, as they place no requirements on short-term rentals for compliance with the fire and safety regulations that other lodging options must comply with under State law. As an industry, we continue to emphasize the need to level the playing field not only on taxes but code enforcement and public protections as well. To this end, we will continue to educate legislators on the need for statewide regulation and oversight on such an important issue facing the industry.

Tourism Funding

Governor Cuomo advanced the following tourism funding initiatives in his Executive Budget proposal:

- Matching Grants - \$3,815,000
- I Love NY - \$2,500,000
- Market New York - \$7,000,000
- Taste NY - \$1,100,000
- Beekmantown Information Center - \$196,000
- Binghamton Information Center - \$196,000
- Cultural arts and public spaces fund, including projects that increase tourism - \$10,000,000
- Round 7 of the REDCs are advanced

NYSH&TA is requesting a \$1.8 million increase to the Matching Grants program to fund the program at \$5 million. This program is critical, as it is matched on a dollar for dollar basis by the tourism industry. The initiative is a public/private partnership used to market regional tourism attractions in New York.

Small Business Package

NYSH&TA is working to introduce legislation that will benefit the tourism industry as a whole, and small businesses particularly. Topics for this package may include:

- Training Wage/Seasonal Workforce;
- Ski Equipment Tax Credit;
- Tax Credits for Hiring Youth or Seasonal Workers

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Capital Region Public Transportation Upgrades

The taxicab industry has faced ongoing issues in Upstate New York regarding customer service, pricing, and overall quality for many years, with significant numbers of customer complaints in recent years. Last year, the State enacted legislation that would authorize the Capital District Transit Authority (CDTA) and the municipalities in its transportation district to enter into agreements allowing the CDTA to streamline some of the administrative pieces of the taxi industry, with the goal of improving taxi service and making service consistent. This law lays a perfect foundation for the type of management needed if ridesharing were to be expanded upstate. To that end, NYSHTA supports the efforts of the Business Council, and other tourism agencies to bring practically regulated ridesharing Upstate. Ridesharing applications must be adequately regulated to promote user safety, and ensure a quality experience.

A special thank you to NYSH&TA's
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Capital Region Legislative Issues 2017

Filming tax credits

The New York State Film Production Tax Credit program implemented in 2004 is set to expire in 2019. Last year the program was expanded to include additional counties including Rensselaer, Saratoga and Washington Counties. The program has proven very successful generates \$10.4 billion dollars statewide in economic activity and creating more than 89,000 high paying jobs statewide according to the New York Production Alliance. Governor Andrew Cuomo has included the extension of the Film Production Tax Credit in the 2017-2018 budget. The Capital Saratoga Region urges the Governor and lawmakers to extend and fund the Film Production Tax Credit.

Rideshare and the sharing economy

Capital Saratoga Regional partners enthusiastically support legislation that will allow ride sharing companies like Uber and Lyft to operate outside New York City.

Taxi service

While regional partners are encouraging ride share, their services should be only a part of the region's transportation portfolio. A dedicated group of community leaders have been looking for a solution to professionalize taxi services and make it simpler for taxi companies to operate in the region. This regional solution would simplify the licensing and inspection of taxi cabs and provide one centralized entity to perform these tasks. The group will continue to develop the process which may require legislative action.

Short-term rental unit's regulation parity

We join our tourism colleagues in asking for parity in the unregulated short-term rentals of rooms and homes being posted on websites. Our hotel partners have health, safety, tax and insurance law requirements that do not apply to these private rentals. For issues of safety and fairness we support the call for legislation.

Specific Sponsor Issues

Albany County Convention and Visitors Bureau

New York State Convention Center / The Albany Capital Center

Approval to proceed with a Convention Center in Albany was provided by the Executive Branch in 2013. The center will open on March 1, 2017. Work is ongoing to assure a close working relationship with both the County owned Times Union Center, The Empire State Plaza and Egg as well as the adjacent Renaissance Hotel to achieve maximum economic impact. **It is also imperative that the legislature both county and state work together to assure the continued reauthorization of the 6% hotel occupancy tax. While the tax with its current distribution was confirmed at the end of 2016, with a 2 year renewal period it is imperative to keep this issue top of mind.** These funds are used for marketing and research by the ACCVB, maintain and improving the Times Union Center and for the operations of the Albany Capital Center. Any time gap in this funding would be detrimental to all facilities.

Maintain and Grow strong regional and statewide tourism marketing programs

Governor Cuomo continues to take a keen interest in travel and tourism and has provided additional funding through the Regional Economic Development Councils, increasing and adding funding to statewide tourism programs. This is encouraging since little attention had been provided to this economic giant in the past few years. Approximately \$10 million was awarded to tourism related projects in the last round. A tourism task force was developed to help guide these decisions. The Governor awarded a fifth round in December 2015. Many smaller organizations have now received grants. **Since all grants are reimbursable, the ACCVB would like to recommend the development of a revolving loan fund that would encourage smaller organizations with important programs to apply for CREDC grants. There is precedent within other REDC's.**

Maintain the ILNY Matching Funds program

Working together as Tourism Promotion Agencies, we have developed strong cooperative programming that could only be accomplished with the infusion of matching funds. It is a legislative initiative which must be maintained. **We support the request of the Tourism Industry Coalition to fund the program at \$3.8 million in 2017-18.**

Transportation issues

Legislation passed in the 2016 session is providing the CDTA with the authority to more effectively manage the region's **taxi services**. A group of local leaders including Assembly members continue to meet to explore the opportunity to create a more comprehensive transportation program that will affect the taxi services in our region. Work on a regional ordinance for the taxi industry is nearing completion. It will provide a simplified, set of standards that will positively impact the immediate Capital region.

Further, the Bureau supports **ride sharing** (Uber, Lyft, etc.) in upstate New York. These services should be provided to keep upstate New York competitive. The ACCVB is in full support of this legislation and action to help complete our transportation portfolio.

Short term rental market - As the tourism marketing agency for Albany County, there is growing concern about the private short term rental market. The field need to be fair for all who participate in this activity to assure customer safety and to establish appropriate regulation and taxation policies.

Thank you to this morning's co-sponsors:

Albany County Convention and Visitors Bureau

The Albany County Convention and Visitors Bureau, a private not for profit organization represents the hospitality industry within Albany County while working closely with other regional partners to increase tour, travel and conference spending to the greater Capital- Saratoga and Hudson Valley regions. Regional (6 county) traveler spending in 2015 was \$1.88 billion (3.3% growth) generating \$234 million in state and local taxes and providing 23,607 regional jobs, 10,766 in Albany County alone. Bureau staff acts as the sales staff and spokesperson for visitor related businesses; provides services to visitors, clients and members and helps to foster a positive visitor experience.

Rensselaer County Tourism Advisory Board

The Rensselaer County Tourism Advisory Board is comprised of members from all sectors of the tourism industry who meet on a bi-monthly basis. The Tourism Advisory Board meetings provide a venue for tourism entities both small and large an opportunity to network and partner to the benefit of both. The tourism entities join together to cross promote and collaborate to improve the visitor's experience. Rensselaer County is an active participant in both the Capital Saratoga and Hudson Valley regional tourism groups which provides Rensselaer County the opportunity to market tourism venues and events in a broader market.

Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce

The Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce has nearly 2,300 members who employ more than 65,000 people. Besides networking and educational events, International trips and advocacy, the Chamber also serves as Saratoga County's Tourism Promotion Agency. Each year, the Chamber creates and manages the County's marketing program seeking to attract visitors from around the world to visit Saratoga County year-round.

Saratoga Convention & Tourism Bureau

As a key economic development engine for this community, the mission of the Saratoga Convention & Tourism Bureau is to contribute a positive impact on the local economy by promoting and marketing Saratoga Springs & Saratoga County as a world class destination for meetings, conventions and groups.

Washington County Tourism

Within the boundaries of Washington County lies 837 square miles of astounding beauty, and a wealth of attractions, both natural and man-made. Bounded on the east by the Green Mountains of Vermont, the north by Lakes Champlain and George, the west by Saratoga Springs and the south by the Capital District, Washington County is situated at the heart of a region that offers visitors a number of intriguing ways to discover, play, connect, and rejuvenate.

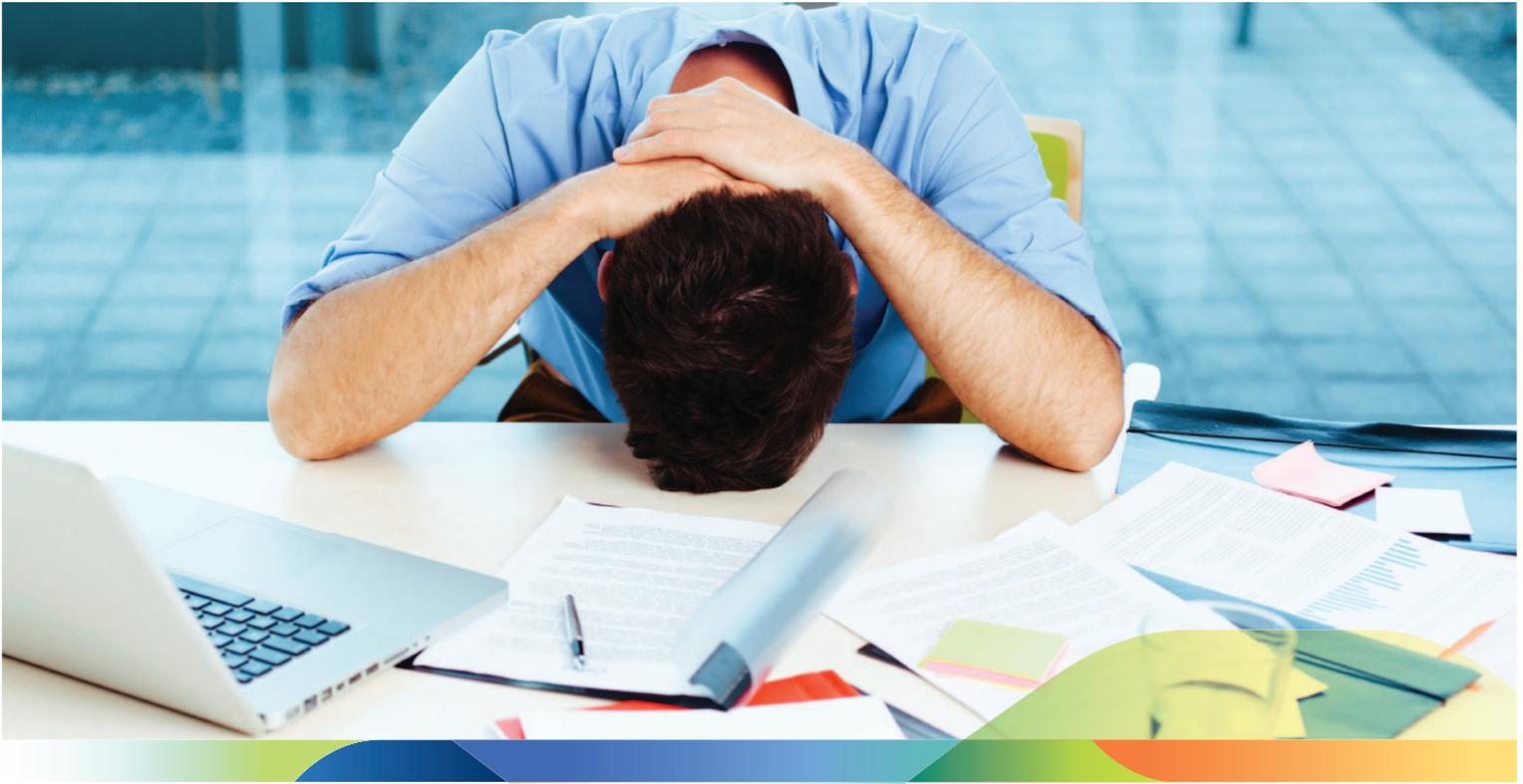


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