



**Central Florida
Hotel & Lodging Association**

2025 Florida Legislative Session Priorities





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CENTRAL FLORIDA HOTEL & LODGING ASSOCIATION 2025 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES



Tourist Development Tax (TDT)

In 1977, the Florida Legislature passed the "Tourist Development Tax" (F.S.125.0104) at the request of Florida lodging executives. The purpose of the tax was to **create a dedicated revenue source for local tourism promotion and the reinvestment in publicly owned and operated capital improvements** such as convention centers, sports stadiums, sports arenas, coliseums, auditoriums, aquariums, or museums.

The proper reinvestment and **appropriate use of TDT will drive further visitation to our destination** and continue to benefit our local economy and residents through increased jobs and wages, sales tax revenue, property tax, etc.

CFHLA **strongly opposes adding any new or expanded uses for Tourist Development Tax (TDT) revenues.** Any new or expanded uses of TDT will only serve to dilute the effectiveness of these dollars, which are statutorily established for the local promotion and marketing of tourism.

Lastly, **CFHLA opposes the periodic readoption of the TDT through local voter referendum.** Requiring the periodic readoption of the TDT through voter referendum would eliminate the ability of local governments to pledge these funds for bonding for any project that would exceed the period of readoption (typically 30 years). In addition to expending the additional dollars to pay for these referenda, local governments will spend time and resources every five years to promote re-adoption rather than concentrating their efforts on the work of tourism promotion.



VISIT FLORIDA Funding

CFHLA **supports the continued annual recurring funding of VISIT FLORIDA.** Funding of **VISIT FLORIDA** ensures that our state continues to be top of mind as the leading vacation destination in the country. Additionally, CFHLA supports extending VISIT FLORIDA's sunset date to facilitate strategic planning and marketing for the near and long term.

CFHLA also **opposes any efforts to replace VISIT FLORIDA funding from the state budget with county-level TDT revenues.** Local TDT revenues are committed to vital projects and organizations that generate visitation - providing local economic development and job creation.



Increased Funding for Transportation and Infrastructure Projects

CFHLA **supports the increased funding of essential transportation and infrastructure projects across the Central Florida region (excluding using TDT funds).** This includes the Moving Florida Forward Initiative and expanding our region's intermodal transportation system through projects including, the Sunshine Corridor, connecting SunRail to MCO, and the tourism corridor.



Additional Education Funding for Hospitality/Culinary Programs at our Local Schools, Colleges, and Universities

CFHLA **supports additional funding for our hospitality and culinary programs at our local high schools, as well as the increased per-student funding at Valencia College, Seminole State College, and the University of Central Florida.** Currently, Valencia College and Seminole State College are among the lowest per student funding institutions in the state. This is why it is imperative that CFHLA supports the Florida College System Council of Presidents allocation request of \$200 million (using their formula) in new, recurring funds to help recruit and retain the best faculty and invest in rapid credentialing workforce development programs that increase capacity within our region (including new and existing advanced accelerated programs).



Workforce Housing

CFHLA supports the continued full funding for the Sadowski Fund, as the Central Florida community has a dire need for more reliable and affordable housing options.

CFHLA also **urges the Legislature to consider modifications to the Live Local Act,** including broadening the innovative approaches to affordable housing development (excluding using TDT funds) and fostering support from local county and municipal governments.



Commercial Property Insurance Reform

The cost of insurance has increased significantly – not just for residents, but also for Florida businesses. The cost increases for commercial payers are often so large that it impacts customers, guests, and employees. As the Florida Legislature continues its work to make insurance more affordable for residential and individual customers, so too do commercial insureds need the attention of the Legislature so that Florida's businesses can continue to thrive.

CFHLA supports any legislative efforts that are aimed at reducing the cost of commercial insurance in Florida.



Statewide Regulation of Vacation Rentals and Advertising Platforms

While vacation home rentals have long been available in Florida, the option to list available units online through advertising platforms has caused this lodging sector to explode by more than 50,000 units across the Central Florida region. Florida's statutes need to be updated to ensure that all of Florida's public lodging establishments provide safe and quality experiences for their guests and communities - without infringing on the rights of local governments or unduly burdening vacation rental owners and rental platforms.

Florida also ranks as the third highest state for human trafficking cases in the United States. Each year, thousands are trafficked in the United States, and traffickers often rely on businesses to sustain their operations. Recently, traffickers have begun to utilize vacation home rentals for their criminal activity. With millions of visitors coming to our state each year, Florida's hospitality industry must serve as a leader in the fight to combat human trafficking, and it is critical that our industry continues to raise awareness through education and training.

CFHLA strongly supports the following:

- Requiring initiatives that ensure vacation home rentals on advertising platforms also practice the same safety standards as traditional lodging to protect visitors and their experience. These standards include but are not limited to; **human trafficking awareness, training and prevention, regular health and safety standards and inspections, pool safety and drowning prevention, hygiene, and cleaning procedures, as well as mandatory occupancy requirements to protect visitors and their experience.**
- Requiring advertising platforms to confirm the licensing/registration of vacation home rentals with the State Department of Revenue and the Department of Business and Professional Regulation prior to listing.
- Requiring advertising platforms to collect and remit all taxes.
- Requiring advertising platforms to list the vacation rental license number on the advertisement of the units.
- Allowing local governments the option to establish a robust local registration system for vacation rentals.
- Requiring the proper homeowners and commercial insurance coverage.
- Requiring advertising platforms to confirm licensure of units being advertised and protect consumers from fraudulent transactions.
- Reasonable and effective penalty provisions for noncompliance, such as higher monetary penalties and vacation rental license revocation provisions; and
- Clear and consistent audit provisions to allow for accurate assessment of compliance.



Timeshare Revisions

CFHLA supports both of ARDA's legislative proposals, including making timeshare-specific changes to the provisions passed in two condo/HOA bills passed during the 2024 Florida Legislative Session (HB 1021 and HB 1203).

Most notably, the proposal provides for a separate provision in F.S. 721 for timeshare associations and managers related to the bidding of contracts for goods and services. The recently approved legislation required that any contract valued over \$2,500 would be subject to competitive bidding if there was any relationship between the vendor and the manager or a board member. Timeshare managers and service providers are often integrated, particularly when under a major hospitality brand, and levels of service represented by the brand are part of the value proposition to owners.

Additionally, most timeshare associations operate on a far greater scale than a typical condo HOA, providing everything from bathroom supplies and housekeeping services to furnishings in units as common expenses. Given the context, a limit of \$2,500 is exceptionally low.

The proposed legislation would replace these provisions with new notice requirements to owners regarding these relationships.



Clarifying Transient Occupancy

CFHLA supports making the necessary changes to Chapter 509.141, Florida Statutes, to provide more clarity to guests, law enforcement, and lodging establishments.

Chapter 509.141, Florida Statutes, permits licensed public lodging establishments to remove disruptive, violent, law-breaking, and non-paying guests from their property. It further allows for the engagement of law enforcement for assistance if the guest refuses to leave. This procedure is specifically separate and apart from the eviction procedures present in Chapter 83, Florida Statutes, which controls landlord/tenant relationships.

Chapter 509.141, F.S., as currently constructed, does not provide clear guidance to guests, law enforcement, and lodging establishments regarding how the law should be applied to non-paying guests. Many public lodging establishment operators, upon trying to remove non-paying guests, are told that the delinquent guest is a tenant and that Chapter 83 eviction proceedings must be used in order to remove the guest. This legal ambiguity results in significant financial harm to the operator of the establishment because they are losing the monies due for the room rental, and they are forced to assume the additional cost and time of the traditional eviction process.



Interchange Fees on Sales Tax

The cost of labor, goods, and equipment continues to rise, while margins continue to remain tight. Florida merchants pay over \$288 million annually in interchange fees on the sales taxes and bed taxes they are required to collect. Credit card companies and banks should not be permitted to profit from merchants' required performance of a public duty. Interchange fees should not be paid on sales taxes collected by Florida merchants.

Existing point-of-sale systems can be programmed to accommodate this change, and certain cards are already capable of being processed in a manner that makes it clear which taxes are collected. The legislation proposed in 2023 also allowed for a rebate to the merchant upon the submission of appropriate tax records. This would not change the responsibility of the merchant to pay interchange fees on the items and services that they sell.

Interchange fees are being increased yet again, and more merchants are turning to surcharging as a means of absorbing this cost, which impacts consumers directly.

CFHLA supports prohibiting the collection of interchange on sales tax will provide relief to businesses, which will in turn provide relief to consumers.

OTHER ISSUES CFHLA IS MONITORING



Tax Packages



Regulation of Cashless Businesses



Condo Regulation



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