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December 19, 2024

CFHLA Advocacy Wins in 2024

As we wrap up this year, CFHLA is proud to share our 2024 advocacy victories that we achieved over the past 12 months:

- CFHLA had an extremely successful Legislative Session, as we successfully accomplished 5 of our main **2024 Legislative Priorities**. This included:

- The **exclusion of the House's proposed TDT provision in the Florida Tax Package** that would sunset the Tourist Development Taxes (TDT) unless approved by a voter referendum before July 1, 2029.
- The Senate and House agreed **to fund VISIT FLORIDA at \$80 million**, with all \$80 million recurring next year. This means VISIT FLORIDA will have a minimum budget of \$80 million in annual funding from the state moving forward, which is the largest amount appropriated ever.
- The approved 2024-2025 State of Florida Budget included the **full funding of the Sadowski Fund**, as our Central Florida community is in dire need for more reliable and affordable housing. In the end, the Florida Legislature fully funded these efforts with \$178 million for the State Housing Partnership Program (SHIP), \$84 million for the State Apartment Incentive Loan Program (SAIL) and \$100 million for the Hometown Heroes program for down payment and closing cost assistance for first time homebuyers.
- Lastly, the Governor signed HB 429 which sought the **clarification and modernization of several provisions in the Florida Timeshare Act**. This was a top legislative priority and will be very beneficial for our Timeshare properties.



- The CFHLA PAC endorsed candidates won **18 out of 22 races in the General Election, which was an 81% success rate**. This includes every CFHLA PAC endorsed candidate who ran for the [Florida Senate](#) and the [Florida House](#). We believe all of these candidates will be strong champions for the hospitality and tourism industry during 2025 and beyond.
- The Central Florida Hotel and Lodging Association's Board of Directors strongly **opposed Florida's Constitutional Amendment #3**, Recreational Marijuana, which was rejected by the voters on the November 5th General Election ballot.
- The CFHLA PAC supported the renewal of the **Orange County half-penny sales tax renewal** for our local schools. This important local initiative was **approved with more than 71% of the voters** on the General Election ballot. The tax revenue will be used for the construction of new schools and the maintenance of existing schools, to improve technologies, and boost school security.
- The CFHLA PAC was also a champion for the **Seminole County one-penny infrastructure sales tax renewal** that supports our local Seminole County schools, reduces traffic, and improves public safety and infrastructure projects. This important local initiative was also **approved by more than 73% of the voters**.
- CFHLA led the charge to help secure the long-term and critical funding for [Visit Orlando](#) this past May. After several months of discussions and negotiations with Orange County Government, the [Board of Orange County Commissioners](#) agreed to a renewed contract with Visit Orlando that will secure their funding agreement until 2032. These funds are critical to continue marketing Orlando as a top tourist destination to generate huge economic impact for our region.
- Furthermore, CFHLA advocated to increase the budget for our local Sports Incentive Fund. In May 2024, the BOCC increased the annual funding to \$10 million, empowering our sports tourism partners including [Greater Orlando Sports Commission](#) and [Florida Citrus Sports](#) to seek additional world class sporting events that help Orlando remain the top sports destination in America.
- After nearly two years of discussions, CFHLA's advocacy work paid off as Orange County approved a plan that utilized Orange County's Tourist Development Tax (TDT) revenues to pay for upgrades to [Camping World Stadium](#) and the [Kia Center](#). Recently, the Board of Orange County Commissioners approved an agreement with

the [City of Orlando](#) to use **\$626 million** in future TDT revenues for much needed upgrades at the two venues. This includes:

- **Camping World Stadium** which will now undergo a **\$400 million** investment that will complete the stadium campus, including a state-of-the-art, 65,000+ seat venue consistent with the fan experience at modern stadiums. When finished, the stadium campus will be a world-class venue that can host over a hundred events and one million visitors annually - with two-thirds originating outside of our community.
- The **Kia Center** will now receive **\$226 million** for much-needed systems and technology updates. With more than 233 incredibly diverse events that were hosted in 2022 (Orlando Magic games only account for 42 games, which is less than 10% of the programming), this community venue has far exceeded expectations and it's overdue for repair and replacement of several major systems and technology that are vital to operating well into the future.

What's next: CFHLA is looking forward to continuing this momentum into 2025 and advocating on behalf of the our hospitality and tourism industry at the state and local level.





Jacqueline Bozzuto Named 2024 CFHLA PAC Board Member of the Year



The **2024 CFHLA PAC Board Member of the Year Award** recipient is **Jacqueline Bozzuto**, Shareholder and Co-Chair of Hospitality & Leisure at [Lowndes](#). Jackie was presented with the prestigious award this past weekend at the [CFHLA Hospitality Gala](#).

Jackie was instrumental in working closely with our PAC Board leadership to help **elect 18 out of 22 of our endorsed candidates**, to help defeat Florida's Constitutional

Amendment #3 - Recreational Marijuana, and to help pass both local sales tax renewals in Orange and Seminole Counties.

This included Jackie playing a pivotal role interviewing candidates during the endorsement process, to help our PAC Board select candidates for state and local offices who we felt were the most pro-tourism and hospitality champions.

Lastly, during the 2024 Florida Legislative session, Jackie attended Florida Tourism Day at the State Capitol, along with several other advocacy trips throughout the year. She worked tirelessly to educate our state and local leaders about the strong positive impact that our industry makes on creating jobs, growing the local economy and supporting the arts organizations and cultural venues throughout the Central Florida region.

On behalf of CFHLA, we'd like to extend our gratitude to Jackie Bozzuto for her unwavering dedication and passion for advocating for Central Florida's hospitality industry and our local residents who benefit from it.

Dana Young Retires from Visit Florida

This week, **Dana Young**, President and CEO of [VISIT FLORIDA](#), announced her retirement after six years of service leading the state's official tourism marketing organization. Young, the longest-serving agency head in the DeSantis Administration, will remain in her role until a new President and CEO is onboarded.

CFHLA honored Dana Young with the **2022 Public Servant of the Year Award** for serving as a statewide champion of tourism and for her strong leadership to help Florida's hospitality and tourism industry recover after the Pandemic.



Under President Young's leadership, Florida's tourism reached new heights, with **140.6 million visitors in 2023**, driving a **\$127.7 billion economic impact**. Visitation rose 7.3% during her tenure, and economic impact grew 32.4%. Florida's tourism recovery from the pandemic significantly outpaced that of the US as a whole, beating projections by two years.

Prior to her role at Visit Florida, Dana served in the Florida House and Florida Senate from 2010 through 2018. Young was then appointed as VISIT FLORIDA's President and CEO by **Governor Ron DeSantis** in January of 2019.

Florida's Record Year for Tourism is Great for Central Florida

The state of Florida just released the latest available annual travel data, and the results are clear. Florida remains the premier travel destination of the nation and the world.

Governor Ron DeSantis announced record-breaking visitation numbers to the Sunshine State for 2023. Tourists to Florida **spent a record \$131 billion** in the state—an increase

of 5% over 2022. That's in addition to **\$36.9 billion in local, state, and federal tax revenue.**

It's amazing news for our hospitality and tourism industry here in Central Florida! **74 million people visited Orange, Osceola and Seminole Counties** in 2023, generating **\$92.5 billion in economic impact**, providing **\$6.6 billion in local and state tax revenue** and generating **\$27.3 billion in Central Florida wages**. These huge tourism numbers are also saving each household in our area **\$7,400 in annual taxes**.

Highlights from 2023 statewide data include:

- Florida's tourism industry generated \$127.7 billion in economic impact in 2023, a 5% increase over 2022.
- Domestic visitors to Florida spent \$116.1 billion, while international visitors contributed \$14.9 billion, providing a \$131 billion out-of-state spending stimulus to Florida's economy.
- For every dollar spent by a visitor, the Florida economy retained 97 cents, with 58 cents supporting worker salaries and 13 cents collected as state and local taxes.
- Tourism contributed \$36.9 billion in local, state, and federal taxes last year.
- Visitors spent an average of \$359 million per day in Florida.
- Tourism was responsible for 9.5% of jobs across the state, with the industry supporting 2.1 million jobs and providing \$76.4 billion in wages and salaries to workers across the state.



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Central Florida Legislators Get Key Committee Leadership Positions

Recently, both **Senate President Ben Albritton** and **House Speaker Daniel Perez** announced which lawmakers will lead various legislative committees and subcommittees during the upcoming 2025 legislative session. Here are the committees

where Central Florida lawmakers will carry extra clout.

Senate President Pro Tempore Jason Brodeur, will serve as the Chair for the Appropriations Committee on Agriculture, Environment and General Government.

Additionally, State Senator Kristen Arrington, Carlos Guillermo Smith and Geraldine Thompson will serve as Vice Chairs. Arrington was placed on the Commerce and Tourism Committee. Smith will serve on the Criminal Justice Committee. Thompson will serve on the Appropriations Committee for Pre-K-12 education.

Furthermore, State Representative Susan Plasencia will be a Vice Chair on two committees this Spring. Plasencia will serve as the Vice Chair on the Health and Human Services Committee, as well as the Vice Chair on the Civil Justices and Claims Subcommittee. Plasencia won her second term in November.

Meanwhile, **State Representative Rachel Plakon**, from Lake Mary, will serve as the Vice Chair on the Careers and Workforce Subcommittee.

In addition, **State Representative Doug Banson**, from Apopka, will be Vice Chair on the Student Academic Success Subcommittee.

Lastly, Speaker Perez named Winter Springs **State Representative David Smith** as the Alternating Chair on the Joint Committee on Public Counsel Oversight.

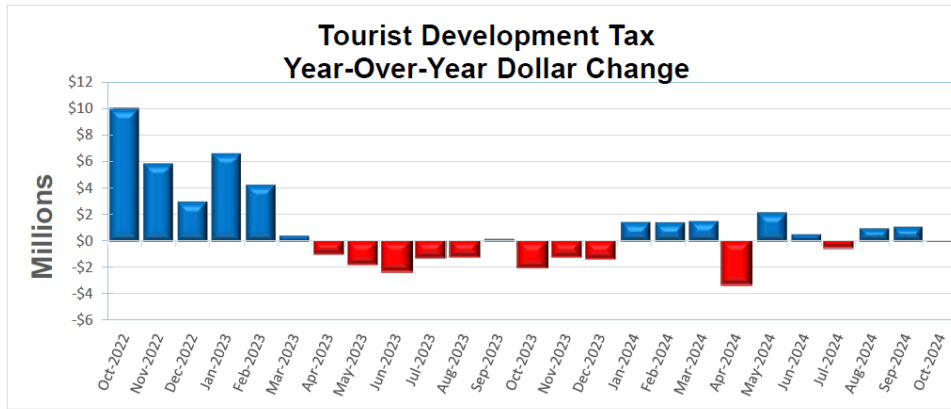
Congratulations to each of this elected leaders and we are looking forward to a positive outcome for the hospitality and tourism industry during the 2025 Florida Legislative Session. The 2025 Legislative Session officially begins on March 4 and runs through May 2.

Regional Tourist Development Tax Update

Orange County

The Tourist Development Tax (TDT) collections received by **Orange County** for the month of **October** was **\$29,468,200**. This represents a **0.2% increase** from the previous year.

The chart below shows the monthly year-over-year dollar amount change in TDT collections since October 2021.



Source: Phil Diamond, CPA – Orange County Comptroller

Osceola County

Osceola County collected **\$6.1 million** in **TDT** for the month of **October, 2024**, representing a **6% increase** compared to the prior year.

Year to date TDT collections are **\$87,445,446**, which is down slightly by **0.2%** from one year ago.

By the Numbers: TDT Collections



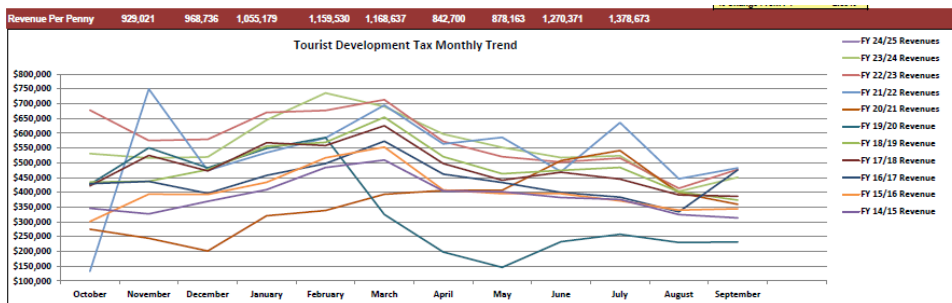
Collections for October 2024 total \$6.1M, up 6% compared to the prior year.

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Seminole County

Seminole County has reported its **Tourist Development Tax (TDT)** collection for **October, 2024** at **\$614,367** compared to **\$450,367** during September. County officials say Hurricane Milton during October brought a lot of visitors inland to Seminole County. The October 2024 numbers represent a **15.7%** increase from one year ago.

Seminole County collected **\$6.68 million in TDT revenue** for FY 2023 - 2024, which ended on September 30th. This represents the **second highest TDT collection** in Seminole County history.



Government Affairs January Meeting at Lowndes

The [CFHLA Governmental Affairs Committee](#) will hold its first meeting of 2025 at [Lowndes](#) on January 15th from 12 pm to 1:30 pm.

The 2025 committee members will meet to discuss and approve a draft of our 2025 Legislative Priorities. This draft will then be presented to the **CFHLA Board of Directors** for consideration. CFHLA looks forward to working with our Governmental Affairs Committee members, local partners and elected officials to strongly advocate for our industry throughout 2025.

DONATE

CFHLA MEMBERS - Please **consider making a small donation of \$50** via the link below to the CFHLA PAC/PC. All contributions help CFHLA expand its efforts to support Hospitality-Friendly candidates who are running for local and state offices in the future. **In the 2024 General Election, 18 of 22 or 81% of the PAC endorsed candidates were elected.**

[DONATE NOW!](#)

IN THE NEWS

[With Epic Universe on the Way, Orange County Expects Tourist Tax Revenue Jump](#) - News 6

[Florida Sees a Drop in New Unemployment Claims](#) - Florida Politics

[The Fluoride Debate Comes to Central Florida - Orlando Sentinel](#)

[New Tourism District Poised to Fund Seminole Co Venues - WFTV](#)

[Osceola County Proposes Plan for Orlando City SC and Pride to Train in Kissimmee - GrowthSpotter](#)

[State Rep. Anna Eskamani to Run for Orlando Mayor - Orlando Sentinel](#)

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About

CFHLA

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The mission of the Central Florida Hotel and Lodging Association is to represent the Central Florida Hospitality Industry, by setting the standard of excellence through advocacy, collaboration, education, recognition, and service.