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SENATOR CARLOS GUILLERMO SMITH SECURES TOURISM DEVELOPMENT TAX REFORMS IN SENATE TAX PACKAGE SPB 7034

Proposed reforms allow hotel tax investments in public transit and limit wasteful government spending at Visit Orlando

TALLAHASSEE, FL - Today, the Florida Senate published the full details of its annual tax package, SPB 7034, in advance of its first scheduled vote in the Finance and Tax Committee on Tuesday, April 15th. Included in the sweeping legislation are much-needed Tourist Development Tax reforms introduced and championed by **Senator Carlos Guillermo Smith (D-Orlando)** providing local government the flexibility to invest hotel tax revenue in public transportation and limit wasteful government spending at Visit Orlando.

Senator Smith offered the following comment in response to SPB 7034:

"The inclusion of our TDT reforms in the Florida Senate tax package are a critical first step towards transformational change in how local government can use hotel taxes to fund community needs. If passed, these proposals would immediately empower Orange County to use tourist development taxes to help fund a Sunrail connection to the Orlando airport, expand LYNX bus service countywide, and reduce wasteful government spending on corporate advertising via Visit Orlando. These reforms give Central Florida the opportunity to reach our full tourism potential by investing in desperately-needed destination infrastructure for tourists, tourism workers, and local residents alike. I am grateful to Senator Bryan Avila and President Albritton for their consideration of these common sense proposals that will have a tremendously positive impact on Senate District 17."

Currently, Orange County levies a 6% Tourist Development Tax on hotel stays and short-term rentals. Last year, TDT collections yielded nearly $360 million. Approximately $100 million from TDT is appropriated annually by Orange County government, but zero TDT dollars are invested in transportation or 'public facilities' due to restrictions in state law on how hotel taxes can be spent.

The Senate tax package, SPB 7034, includes identical provisions from Senator Smith's SB 1114 filed earlier this year which limit the amount of TDT revenues that must be spent to promote and advertise tourism before revenue may be used for 'public facilities' including transportation. Under the bill, a county must spend at least 40 percent of all TDT revenues, but no more than

$50 million annually, to promote or advertise tourism before using revenue for ‘public facilities’ including transportation.

See Senator Smith’s social media posts reacting to the Senate tax package on Twitter, IG, and Facebook.

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