



Tampa Bay
Beaches
Chamber

COMMUNITY ADVOCACY

2024

**REPRESENTING THE NEEDS OF BUSINESSES
ALONG THE TAMPA BAY BEACHES**

**6990 Gulf Boulevard,
St. Pete Beach, FL, 33706**

**www.TampaBayBeaches.com
727-360-6957**

Local Agenda Items

Agenda Item: Pedestrian Safety

Description: Promotion and education of pedestrian safety including crosswalk & bicycle safety throughout Gulf Boulevard is paramount to the local community. The TBBCOC continues to work with Walk/Bike Tampa Bay on an education campaign. (Crosswalks; Education; Protection of current crosswalks)

Agenda Item: Beach Renourishment *Local issue combined with county, state & federal government

Description: Beach renourishment is essential for protecting our award-winning beaches and maintaining a strong and prosperous local economy. The beaches are essential in our efforts to continue breaking tourism records year over year. (Advocate for easements; Army Corp Engineers). Additionally, the TBBCoC encourages the county to approve an increase in the nourishment TDC allocation up to a full penny.

Agenda Item: Business Development

Description: Streamline the process to open a business allowing business owners to invest in our community and reduce burdensome regulations that prevent business owners from upgrading or improving their property. (Signage; Parking)

County Agenda

Agenda Item: Tourist Development Tax: Preservation

Description: Preserving the Tourist Development Tax for its intended purpose is essential to promote our destination, attract visitors, keep taxes low, enhance quality of life, and support the tourism Industry, Pinellas County's #1 industry. The TBBCoC advocates to keep the 60/40 split as VSPC operations currently exist.

Agenda Item: Water Quality

Description: The cleaner our waterways are, the more of an economic impact they generate. Millions of visitors, businesses and residents rely on clean waterways to sustain the quality of life that drew them here. We are seeking a county led approach to keep our agencies in tandem with full county support to continue to invest in water quality.

Agenda Item: Workforce Development/Hospitality

Description: An enhanced pool of qualified workers is essential to remain competitive in a changing economy. Pinellas needs to advance economic well-being by developing and maintaining a quality workforce. (Job placement services; CareerSource which includes state)

Agenda Item: Beach Renourishment

Description: Beach renourishment is essential for protecting our award-winning beaches and maintaining a strong and prosperous local economy. We stand alongside the county in the efforts to get the Army Corp to change its current policy on easements. Additionally, the TBBCoC encourages the county to approve an increase in the nourishment TDC allocation up to a full penny.

Agenda Item: Increase Affordable Housing Supply

Description: This includes preserving existing affordable housing and adding new units. To this end, we support policies that expand the supply of affordable housing options, including streamlining permitting processes and reducing fees for affordable housing construction, expanding public investments to meet the affordable housing need, and increasing funding for public-private partnerships that build affordable homes for low-income families. **Text provided by Habitat for Humanity Pinellas/Pasco; TBBCoC supports*

State Agenda

Agenda Item: Visit Florida

Visit Florida: Support to continue their funding no less than their current funding amounts.

Description: According to the Office of Economic and Demographic Research, for every \$1 the state invests in VISIT FLORIDA – the official tourism marketing corporation for the state of Florida – \$2.15 in tax revenue is generated. VISIT FLORIDA promotes tourism to Florida through sales, advertising, promotions, public relations and visitor services programs. Each decision the agency has made has been based on financial research that led to record tourism and, more importantly, record spending by visitors. As a public/private partnership, VISIT FLORIDA serves more than 11,000 tourism industry businesses.

Agenda Item: Short-term Rentals

Description: All short-term rentals must be regulated the same as any property management company. Currently, property management companies and vacation rental platforms (i.e. Airbnb, HomeAway, etc.) are on uneven playing fields. Both rent properties, however, only property management companies are regulated. This incentivizes people to bypass legitimate business practices and skirt the system.

TBBCoC advocates for a fair and balanced playing field for all vacation rentals. Vacation rentals, either through property management companies or on website platforms, should adhere to operating procedures that ensure the safety of each guest. Additionally, creating an equitable and fair system across the state of Florida for registration fees, penalty fees and possibly inspection requirements is vital to have a healthy balance for Florida's communities. This also assists local governments in enforcement by having collections that can offset the employee expense. Occupancy is also a key factor in legislation as the TBBCoC recognizes that there are bad actors and we need to put some constraints on this aspect of STR. Require a system that the DBPR can guarantee that these STR's are legitimate and pay to play.

Agenda Item: Property Insurance Reform

Description: Though the legislature passed some minor insurance reforms in special sessions. Floridians haven't seen any benefit; they continue to see increases. Floridians need legislation that will combat fraud and increase consumer choice in Florida's property insurance market. Additionally, the legislature must repeal the requirement that if a homeowner is with Citizens Insurance and is NOT in a flood zone they will be required to purchase flood insurance. Finally, this needs to be a level business field. Private insurers must have restrictions on the rates they charge consumers.

Agenda Item: Business Rent Tax

Description: Florida is the only state in America that charges a sales tax on commercial leases/rent. The Florida Chamber supports the elimination or reduction of the Florida-only business rent tax as it puts Florida businesses at a competitive disadvantage. This tax needs to be fully repealed.

Agenda Item: Resiliency (Recycling)

Description: In 2008 the legislature passed the Energy, Climate Change, and Economic Security Act that established a weight-based recycling goal of 75% by 2020. This established annual reporting protocols for counties and statewide recycling goals (40% by 2012, 50% by 2014, 60% by 2016, and 70% by 2018). FDEP reported the state met their 2012 and 2014 benchmarks but failed to meet the 60% goal for 2016 and has continued to decline since that time. 2018 recycling rates were reported at 49%. Only four counties met the 70% goal in this time. Much of this was attributed to a reduction in reported construction and demolition debris that is being recycled. Florida is the most prone to the volatility of climate change and the economic impacts that come with it – with that, recycling policies are economic policies.

TBBCoC advocates for the accountability of local governments who have failed to meet these reporting and performance standards; ensuring Florida counties have programs in place to collect and sort recyclable products; study the impact various discarded products have on our air, food, and water supply, as well as the economic benefit to creating a circular economy. This will ultimately impact the cost of goods for citizens and create jobs. (SB36/HB455)

Agenda Item: Electric Vehicles

Description: Currently EV buyers do not pay into the gas tax fund. In order to equitably fund our infrastructure of roads this bill proposes that EV buyers pay into this fund so that all vehicles using our roadways pay equitably. (Sponsor: Senator Hooper)

Agenda Item: Children in Workforce (16 & 17 Year Olds)

Description: Federal law does not restrict the number of hours or times of day that 16 and 17 year olds may work per week, but the maximum hours per week in Florida is 30 hours and for no more than six days in a row. Florida has a state-level curfew for teenagers, but some cities have stricter juvenile curfews than state law. Teenagers can be ticketed for breaking curfew, and may prevent teenagers from freely working and learning the value of a dollar. Florida could require local curfews to include exemptions for homeschoolers and teenagers with after-school jobs. TBBCoC advocates for the alignment of state and federal age requirement laws to provide more work flexibility to teenagers and address existing labor shortages. (Sponsor: Linda Chaney – HB49)

Federal Agenda

Agenda Item: Beach Renourishment: Army Corps of Engineers

Description: Beach renourishment is essential for protecting our award-winning beaches and maintaining a strong and prosperous local economy. The beaches are essential in our efforts to continue breaking tourism records year over year.

TBBCoC strongly advocates that the Army Corps of Engineers changes its federal policy that currently requires 100% of easements to be signed into perpetuity. These easements should be project based and released once the project is complete.

Agenda Item: Moratorium on Offshore Oil Drilling

Description: The Tampa Bay Beaches Chamber of Commerce is advocating for a moratorium on oil drilling in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico. The outcomes and impacts of Deepwater were too significant to risk this another day.

Agenda Item: Fair Labor Standards Act

Description: The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) has proposed a new regulation to determine whether someone should be classified as an "independent contractor" or an "employee" under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). This new regulation restricts the businesses' discernment of their classification of their employees and relies on DOL approval of their classifications. The TBBCoC is advocating for its withdrawal.

Agenda Item: Flood Insurance

Description: Flood insurance continues to be a growing issue for Floridians with mounting rate increases, making it unaffordable and risky for property owners to sustain ownership in these zones. Representing coastal communities, it is even more important today we continue to fight for better options as it relates to Flood Insurance on the federal level. With advocacy suggestions such as: Lowering the cap per year; providing discounts for flood mitigation efforts like elevated structures; provide property owners more options should they go from NFIP to private or vice versa.

Advocacy 101

In order to truly serve the people they were elected to represent, elected officials need to hear from their constituents about important issues affecting their lives. Personally contacting your elected representatives is one of the most effective ways to get involved in the political process.

Make Contact:

- Visit their office
- Send an email
- Make a phone call
- Write a letter to the editor
- Use social media

Key Points:

- Make an appointment in advance
- Be polite and be concise
- Stick to the issue at hand
- Leave information behind
- Thank them for their time
- Follow-up after the meeting

Resources:

- Chamber Advocacy – www.TampaBayBeaches.com/Advocacy
- Business Assistance – www.TampaBayBeaches.com/BusinessResource
- Elected Officials – www.TampaBayBeaches.com/Elected-Officials
- Florida House of Representatives – www.MyFloridaHouse.gov
- Florida Senate – www.FISenate.gov
- U.S. Congress – www.Congress.gov