



Let's Welcome a Busy Fall Tourism Season!

I say this every year, It's hard to believe that Labor Day weekend is here! I hope all of our hotels, restaurants, attractions, museums, retail, cultural, historic, and arts organizations had a prosperous summer tourism season, and that the fall continues to be strong, attracting in-state and out-of-state business and leisure travelers. The Big E will no doubt continue to be a big draw this year along with all the other fairs in the State and as long as the weather is good, officials are expecting record crowds!

As a reminder, the 2025 legislative session wrapped up in June with the passage of another biennial budget. Tourism marketing funding was maintained at \$4.5 million, with no increase despite our continued advocacy for additional support. While this fell short of some of our goals, we remain committed to our efforts and will continue to push for greater investment in tourism and tourism marketing in the years ahead.

Typically, the post-session period is relatively quiet, but there's talk of a special session that could happen in late September or early October. If it does, it will most likely be to respond to federal changes or other pressing issues that were unresolved during the previous session, such as housing. While a special session may not directly alter current allocations for tourism funding, it would still provide us with an opportunity to maintain our presence, and continue making the case for the value of investing in tourism.

Looking ahead to the 2026 session, we're encouraged by the support we've built at the Capitol and the opportunities that lie ahead. Our focus will be on continuing to advocate for the agenda of the Connecticut Tourism Coalition, finding fresh ways to make our case, and highlighting the numbers and success stories that prove just how important tourism is to our communities. Tourism continues to play a vital role in Connecticut's economy, and with strong advocacy and leadership, we can ensure that its importance is recognized and supported.

During the session there was a big push to support legislation that would allow a portion of the meal tax to be dedicated to tourism marketing. While this legislation didn't pass, the momentum generated for its support was significant. We expect this proposal to receive greater attention as we work with the arts and humanities leaders and constituents to see this across the finish line.

As always, I am forever grateful to our officers, board, and membership for their commitment and continued support. I am also amazed at the amount of time and commitment our exemplary Executive Director Frank Burns puts into this organization daily with assistance from Christine Dagata. Please stay safe, healthy and enjoy the best that fall has to offer in Connecticut!

Paul Mayer



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:



PARTHENON DINER

The Parthenon Diner in Old Saybrook is a beloved institution located at 809 Boston Post Road in Connecticut, United States. This charming diner offers a wide variety of delicious food options for dine-in or takeout. From classic American comfort food to Greek specialties, there is something for everyone at the Parthenon Diner.

Whether you're looking for a quick meal on the go or a relaxed dining experience, this restaurant and store is sure to satisfy your cravings. With friendly service and a welcoming atmosphere, the Parthenon Diner is a must-visit destination in Old Saybrook.



CHAMPION SPOTLIGHT:



DANIEL O'KEEFE

*Commissioner, Department of Economic and
Community Development
Chief Innovation Officer, State of CT*

Daniel O'Keefe is Commissioner of the DECD and was named the State of Connecticut's first Chief Innovation Officer in July 2023. Dan serves as a passionate advocate for the economy and communities throughout Connecticut, focusing on economic growth, workforce development, vibrant communities and job creation.

Prior to entering public service, Dan was a technology investor for 25 years, investing in high growth, innovative companies in the software, consumer and fintech markets. Dan also serves as a Board Member and Chairperson Emeritus of The Opportunity Network (www.OppNet.org), an education and career-skills focused non-profit reaching over 40,000 high-potential students from historically marginalized communities.

Dan holds an MBA with High Distinction (Baker Scholar) from Harvard Business School, where he served as president of its Alumni Board, and an AB from Brown University, where he serves on its president's Leadership Council.

