



LEGISLATION, PIZZA AND SPRING IS ALMOST HERE!

As we near the midpoint of the legislative session, the budget and legislative agendas are becoming clearer. In early February, Governor Lamont presented his \$55 billion biennial budget, highlighting his priorities for the state. However, the proposed budget falls short for Connecticut Tourism, as the tourism fund remains flat-funded, with no increases over the biennium.

Now, the legislature faces the challenge of reviewing the Governor's proposal and crafting its own version. Ultimately, negotiations over the final budget will begin in early April, allowing for the potential inclusion of elements from both the legislative and gubernatorial budgets. This offers optimism as it opens up the ability for tourism funding opportunities despite the Governor's proposal. In addition to seeking funding through the budget process, the Connecticut Tourism Coalition is actively exploring alternative avenues.

Proposed legislation like S.B. 739, *An Act Concerning the Distribution of the Sales and Use Taxes Imposed on Meals Sold by an Eating Establishment, Caterers or Grocery Stores*, offers the possibility of securing new revenue for tourism marketing. Through testifying and advocacy CTC is looking to include tourism funding of the revenue generated by the proposed meal tax. With multiple paths still available to achieve our funding goals, the CTC remains committed to advocating for the tourism industry and advancing our legislative priorities. It is important to talk to your legislators and convey the importance of funding State Tourism Marketing at an appropriate level in order to be competitive with the other new England States attracting visitors and the dollars they bring!

I had the pleasure to attend the State's press conference double down on its title of Pizza Capital of the U.S. A key initiative of this celebration was the announcement of the "Pizza Capital Trail", launching on March 14th, 2025. The State will unveil a ranking of the State's top 100 pizzerias, with selections determined by public voting and expert panels. Pizza fans can cast their votes at PizzaCapitalTrail.com. Connecticut bus company DATTCO, Inc. unveiled a "Pizza Capital of the U.S. bus wrap, taking our State's pizza legacy on the road and "billboarding" that message all over the Northeast!

As always, I am forever grateful to our officers, board and membership for their commitment and support as we approach the busy Spring tourism season. Our exemplary Executive Director Frank Burns, with support from Christine Dagata, continue to work tirelessly to keep this organization focused and on track for success. We will continue to meet and talk to industry and state leaders from all regions on a weekly basis as we work through the second half of the Legislative session. Please stay safe, healthy and enjoy late Winter/Spring in Connecticut!

Paul Mayer



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:



The Connecticut Lodging Association (CLA) was established in 1904 and is the sole trade association representing the state's lodging industry. Advocacy is at the heart of CLA's mission, as it actively speaks on behalf of the industry regarding legislative and regulatory matters in Connecticut. You can make a positive impact by supporting CLA.

The Connecticut Lodging Association has been supporting Hotels, Motels, Bed & Breakfasts, and Tourism Related Businesses since 1904. This trade association aims to promote the lodging industry in Connecticut by representing its members in government and association partnerships. Apart from hotels, motels, resorts, inns, and bed and breakfasts, we also have an allied member program that includes tourism attractions and a range of vendor services.

The Connecticut Lodging Association was incorporated as the Connecticut Hotel Association in September of 1904. The founders were John J. Dahill of Allyn House, Hartford; James Bowker of Winthrop Hotel, Meriden; F.M. Johnson and George Q. Patee. The articles of incorporation stated the following purpose:

- To promote the social and business welfare of its members and to do any and all acts necessary and incidental thereto pertaining.
- To establish and maintain a system of reports which may be used by its members for their guidance and protection.
- To take such steps as may be necessary and proper for the arrest and prosecution of such employees and dishonest persons who may defraud or cheat any of its members.
- To assist its members in procuring honest and competent employees.
- To protect the hotel interests in this State from unjust, unnecessary and discriminating legislative action.
- To do any and all other acts and things necessary and proper to carrying out the purposes and ends above set forth.

Consistent with the National Association's name change, we became the "Connecticut Hotel and Motel Association" in 1967. In 1994, our name was changed to the "Connecticut Lodging and Attractions Association" and our present name was adopted by the membership in 1998.

Our purpose has remained consistent since our founding in 1904, even after 119 years of association and industry history.



Serving Connecticut's
Lodging Industry Since
1904

TOURISM CHAMPION:

State Representative

Vincent Candelora



An American businessman, lawyer, and politician. Candelora is the [State Representative](#) for the 86th House District and also serves as the Republican Minority Leader in the [CT House of Representatives](#), serving residents of North Branford, Durham, East Haven, and Guilford.

He was elected to his 10th term in November 2024, and soon after saw House Republican legislators make him their unanimous choice to serve as Minority Leader for a third two-year term. Candelora, who previously served as a Deputy House Republican Leader, saw his colleagues first choose him as leader in 2020.

Aside from serving as a state representative, Candelora's long record of civic involvement includes three terms on North Branford's Town Council as well as one as deputy mayor. He's volunteered for the town's public school system, and he's a past president of both North Branford's Chamber of Commerce and its Rotary Club.

During his time serving in the General Assembly, Candelora has served on a wide variety of legislative committees—everything from Finance to Public Health—and has led the House Republican caucus Screening Committee that reviews legislation before it's put up for a vote in the House of Representatives.

Over the years, Candelora has helped offer alternative "no tax increase" budget proposals aimed at making Connecticut more affordable while also tackling structural deficits. In 2017, Candelora was integral in ushering a Republican budget through a statehouse where Democrats control both the legislature and governor's office, and he was instrumental in passing the historic bipartisan budget later that year. During his first term as House Republican Leader, Candelora was a persistent advocate for providing residents with significant tax relief, including a \$1.2 billion [plan](#) that included a middle-class tax cut. Throughout the 2023 legislative session, Candelora drove the effort to inject House Republican proposals into budget negotiations involving the Governor's administration and the General Assembly's three other caucuses, issuing a balanced two-year [proposal](#) which shaped the discussion that produced a bipartisan budget delivering \$800 million in tax relief for CT residents.