



THE END OF THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The 2026 Legislative session concluded, and I am sorry to report that there will not be an increase in the Statewide Marketing Fund, and the amount will remain at \$4.5 million for the fiscal year that begins on July 1, 2026.

We spent a great deal of time talking to Legislators, the Chairs of the Finance and Appropriations Committees, and the three Legislative Leaders, Senators Looney, Duff and Speaker Ritter and felt as though we had a commitment that the Legislature would increase the funding level even if it was a small increase.

As a result, we have been talking to our partners, the Conn. Arts Alliance, CT Humanities, and CT Lodging Association, about next steps in addressing the lack of funding for State Wide Marketing and will keep you informed as to what those next steps will be and how you as members of the Coalition can help and assist.

This has been disappointing news, but the Officers and Directors of the Tourism Coalition are determined to go forward in seeking a Sustainable source of funding for Marketing and Promoting all that CT has to offer.

Again, I want to thank all of you who made calls, sent e-mails, spoke to your Legislators or to Leadership, or came to Hartford and testified. The battle is not over, and in many ways, it is just beginning.

Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions.

Thanks, and stay healthy.

Frank Burns
Executive Director



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:



Mark Twain is an enduring symbol of America. He rose from poverty and suffered hardship and great loss, but he never lost his desire to understand and help his fellow human beings, call out wrongs, speak truth to power, give voice to those who had none, and present America to the rest of the world, warts and all.

- We preserve and present to visitors from around the world the house from which sprang most of Twain's greatest works.

- We interpret the material legacy of Mark Twain and the Clemens family in exhibitions and through our curatorial collections.

- Through our public programs, we offer a forum for exploring and discussing issues related to politics and current events that constitute the contemporary mirror of Twain's own passions.

- We use Twain's philosophy, humor, and satire to engage our many audiences and to encourage critical thinking.

- We offer education programs for thousands of schoolchildren each year, furthering their knowledge of history and fostering a love of literature.

- We inspire other writers, hosting many authors each year for public programs. We are a writer's home — and a home for writers.

Mark Twain is a writer who forever deserves to be read and a person we should celebrate for as long as words matter.

CHAMPION SPOTLIGHT:



State Representative

JOSH ELLIOTT

Deputy Speaker Proudly Serving Hamden

Since winning the 88th District House seat in the Connecticut General Assembly in 2016, State Representative Josh Elliott has advocated for implementing progressive policies that will help improve Connecticut's economy and allow it to remain competitive with surrounding states.

Rep. Elliott, who grew up in Connecticut and attended high school in Hamden, graduated with a B.A. in Sociology from Ithaca College. He later went on to obtain his J.D. at Quinnipiac School of Law.

Rep. Elliott is working to ensure that Connecticut employs quality public health standards by pushing for a requirement that all children in the public education system receive proper immunizations. Rep. Elliott is also dedicated to improving the treatment of Connecticut's incarcerated population. He is an active advocate of banning the use of solitary confinement and has independently championed a bill that will provide certain telecommunication services at no cost.

Rep. Elliott believes so deeply that the right to vote is a fundamental feature of government that he has sponsored several bills aimed at efficiently reforming Connecticut's electoral system. Among these are a bill that would restore voting privileges of formerly incarcerated individuals on parole, and a bill that would implement a ranked-choice voting system, which would allow a voter to rank candidates by their preference.

Rep. Elliott pushed for Connecticut to be the first state to remove the cost for incarcerated individuals to make phone calls to loved ones. Prior to this Connecticut had the highest cost in the United States for these calls. Studies show a positive correlation between family communication and lower reincarceration rates.

He has spearheaded efforts to legalize the use of recreational marijuana, sought to equalize property tax rates, and consistently supported establishing a more equitable tax structure.

Rep. Elliott currently serves as Deputy Speaker and Majority Caucus Co-Chair. He is also a member of the Finance, Revenue & Bonding Committee, the Public Health Committee, and the Judiciary Committee.

Train Your Team with CHAT

Connecticut Hospitality Awareness Training, or CHAT for short, is an innovative, educational program developed by the Connecticut Tourism Coalition to train frontline personnel who work at attractions, hotels, restaurants, and other businesses that make up the Connecticut tourism industry.

The CHAT program features an **introductory video** and **seven interactive, online modules**. The program takes under 90 minutes to complete, although participants can learn the material at their own pace. Once a participant receives a score of 70% or better, they have successfully completed the CHAT program. A **Certificate of Achievement** will be awarded from the Connecticut Tourism Coalition at a future tourism event.

CHAT's core curriculum features training on guest service and insight on why tourism matters. Module topics are outlined on the back side of this flyer. With greater knowledge, employees will understand how to best serve our valued guests. It is essential that Connecticut personnel are educated in their field to best represent our tourism industry.

Companies can sign up their employees to take the CHAT program for a package price of \$10 per participant. Contact Frank Burns at the Connecticut Tourism Coalition at flburnsjr@yahoo.com. You will then be assigned a promo code to enroll your team in CHAT at chatcertificate.com.

CHAT will **educate frontline service workers** on how to ensure that Connecticut's tourists will enjoy a **positive visitor experience**.

CHAT is Connecticut's first online training program to educate workers on the **fundamentals of hospitality service** and the **significance of tourism** in our economy.



Become a Connecticut Tourism Champion

The Connecticut Tourism Coalition is proud to announce the creation of an award-winning Hospitality Awareness Training program for Connecticut. This educational program benefits everyone who works directly with visitors.

Earn your industry-recognized visitor service certificate, gain service experience and become a Connecticut Tourism Champion. Earn your certificate and become a member of the Connecticut Hospitality Awareness Training program.

Having a great job is a great experience. It's a great experience to be a part of a team that is dedicated to providing the best possible visitor experience. This is the goal of the Connecticut Hospitality Awareness Training program.

LEARN MORE

[t] CONNECTICUT TOURISM COALITION

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Thank you to our sponsors who underwrote the development cost for CHAT



For more information, contact Frank Burns, Executive Director • flburnsjr@yahoo.com • 518-573-0103

FOR MORE INFO ABOUT THE CT TOURISM COALITION OR TO BECOME A MEMBER, PLEASE VISIT TOURISMCT.COM

The Connecticut Hospitality Awareness Training (CHAT) program will help your staff create positive visitor experiences for your guests. CHAT will help instill your employees with the skills and passion to do their jobs well. Lessons learned will help reinforce important concepts needed to help your team develop and grow their hospitality skillset.

There are seven modules in the CHAT program. Each covers a different aspect of working in the hospitality industry:



Module 1 is a basic framework of tourism and the impact it has on the Connecticut economy. This module also covers why those in the tourism industry make a difference in their interactions with customers and visitors to Connecticut.



Module 2 encompasses what tourists are looking for when they visit CT and approaches all the different ways that a tourism professional could help the visitor have a memorable experience.



Module 3 is all about getting your visitors where they want to go. This section goes over communications with guests and how to provide appropriate resources and directions to visitors.



Earn Your Certification

Sign up for the official Connecticut Hospitality Awareness Training program today! We'll email you the program syllabus, get you set up for online training, and provide you with the resources you need to succeed. Each module contains information, activities and exercises to help you learn the fundamentals of hospitality and your role in helping our visitors. Once you start the online training, you'll receive a link to the online training materials and an email to get you started. The program is available for free to all who complete it.

Take pride in fostering Connecticut Tourism!

Name

Email

Company

Office Phone

Cell Phone



Online Training

Welcome to the official Connecticut Hospitality Awareness Training program! CHAT's successful completion of this online and classroom program will earn the student the certification of completion in a future email award presentation.

Please take a few minutes to complete the program. The entire program takes approximately 45 minutes to complete, but you can work on this over time. If you wish to stop at any time, please click on the video to pause. To continue, simply click on the video to resume. Please enjoy!



Module 1
Why is this important?



Module 2
What visitors want & how to help them



Module 3
Find out what interests them



Module 4
Get them where they want to go



Module 5
Get them more than what they expect



Module 6
Engage Them Every Chance You Get



Module 7
We do a Difference To Them



Conclusion
Congratulations & Well Done!



Module 4 is a guide on showing interest in visitors and creating a relationship that shows you care about them enjoying themselves. This includes targeting questions that may help you better understand their goals for their visit to CT and providing recommendations.



Module 5 is about going above and beyond customer service. This includes knowing your area and other things in the area that your customers may be interested in taking part in. It's about staying in the know in your area and community.



Module 6 includes tips on how to diffuse an upset visitor, how to go over and above for optimal customer service and providing empathy.



Module 7 How to create a positive visitor experience. How to respond to inquiries and keep them coming back!

Sign your team up today!
CHATCertificate.com

For more information, contact Frank Burns, Executive Director • flburnsjr@yahoo.com • 518-573-0103