

# IDA Legislative Agenda 2026

Illinois Destinations Association Urges Renewed Investment in Tourism



## IDA INITIATIVES:

### SB 2803 Feigenholtz/HB 4376 Gordon-Booth – Reinvest Hotel Tax for Tourism Promotion

Currently, 73% of the state's Hotel Tax ends up in the General Revenue Fund (GRF), where it is used for non-tourism purposes. That percentage is growing, leaving less money available each year for investment in tourism promotion. Convention & Visitors Bureaus need resources to compete to bring visitors to Illinois, but their state funding has been flat since FY 20; during the same time, Hotel Tax revenue has increased by nearly \$100 million, or 40%.

Hotel Tax collections typically grow by 2-3% each year, roughly \$7-10 million. This proposal would ensure tourism promotion efforts receive 50% of the annual growth; the other 50% growth would continue to go to GRF. This investment in tourism will drive the tremendous Return on Investment that the Tourism Industry provides for state and local government and Illinois small businesses.

### SB 3038 Ellman/HB 4973 Vella – Makes permanent the Tourism Incentive Grant

The Tourism Incentive Grant Program was first authorized for state Fiscal Year 2024 through new statutory authorization and a one-time, \$15 million appropriation. While this program has already proven successful at luring new events into Illinois, there are no plans for allocating additional resources to the program.

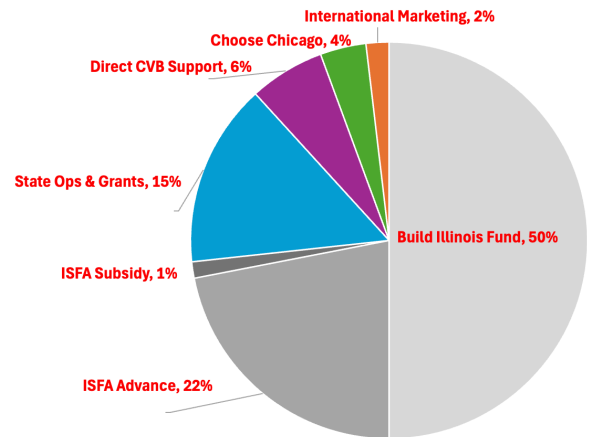
This proposal would provide for the ongoing continuation of the program by (i) establishing an ongoing funding stream to support for periodic re-allocations of funding and (ii) providing additional parameters for the program based on grantee experience.

### HB 3520 Vella – Investment in Illinois' Tourism Infrastructure

Today, 50% of the Hotel Tax revenues are deposited into the Build Illinois Fund. Many years ago, that revenue was used to pay debt service on bonds issued for the state's Build Illinois capital program. Now that those bonds have been fully repaid, these revenues are transferred to GRF for general state purposes.

At the same time, the infrastructure at Illinois' state parks, a major tourism draw, is crumbling. According to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), in 2021 there was over \$1 billion in deferred maintenance needs at the state's recreational lands. DNR manages nearly 400 separate sites with nearly 500,000 acres of recreational land, including state parks, historic sites, natural areas, and more.

This proposal would re-purpose these Hotel Tax revenues in the Build Illinois Fund for new capital investment in the state's tourism assets: \$1 billion for state parks and other lands, and \$500 million for renewed investment in civic centers.



## OTHER NOTEWORTHY LEGISLATION:

**Support: SB 3599 Hastings & HB 5222 Vella – Protects hotel operators against non-paying occupants**

**Support: HB 5203 Kelly – Tax credit for hotel operators to assist with property renovations**

**IDA OPPOSES** legislation that would (i) increase the cost of hotel stays, making Illinois less competitive compared to other markets, and (ii) decrease state and local government investment in tourism promotion.

## ABOUT IDA

The Illinois Destinations Association (IDA) represents destination marketing organizations throughout the entire state. IDA is composed of hundreds of industry professionals which are driving results for Illinois' visitor economy.

IDA works to market, promote and develop our communities and regions as destinations for visitors and investments.

IDA members are on the front lines of competing for trade shows, conventions, group tours, business, sporting events, and leisure travel, bringing huge economic benefits to our communities, not only in terms of increased tax revenues, but also in supporting our local businesses, growing jobs, and improving Illinoisans' quality of life.



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