

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

Submitted to the Committee on Ways & Means

For HB 5596

Compiled on: Monday, April 14, 2025 12:49 PM

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Hearing Date: April 14, 2025 10:00 AM

Craig Keeble
Self
Galveston, TX

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 2532/House Bill 5596, which helps ensure Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) revenues are spent as originally intended, to promote tourism and support the hospitality industry in coastal cities such as Galveston. Tourism plays a critical role in our local economy, supporting small businesses, creating jobs, and funding amenities that benefit both residents and visitors. When HOT revenue is diverted, it undermines the health of Galveston and our future as an economically viable part of the state.

SB 2532/HB 5596 encourages cities to follow existing state law by tying the voter-approved tax rate to how HOT revenue is allocated. It promotes transparency and ensures funds are directed to local tourism programs, such as those managed by the Galveston Park Board. It helps to ensure that we continue to maintain beaches, attract visitors, and enhance the overall experience of our community. It is the reason so many people love to call Galveston home or love visiting year after year.

Please support this important legislation that keeps tourism dollars working for Texas.

Joan Dunlap
Camp Allen
Houston, TX

It has been brought to my attention that Grimes County has proposed a hotel occupancy tax increase of 7% in unincorporated areas, bringing the total hotel occupancy tax for establishments like Camp Allen to an unreasonable 13%.

I strongly urge you to grant a full exemption, in compliance with Texas Tax Code Chapter 352, to Camp Allen, a religious nonprofit that has served as a vital resource for churches, schools and other nonprofits for over 100 years.

As a nonprofit, Camp Allen already operates on tight margins and reinvests all revenue into our mission, but the proposed tax would force us to cut expenses, reduce staffing, and limit our ability to provide scholarships and programs to underserved populations and Title 1 schools.

I believe in the mission of Camp Allen, and I know personally the positive impact and leadership development that Camp Allen offers the youth of Texas, as well as facilities that host nonprofits from around the country.

Again, I urge you to grant Camp Allen a full exemption from the proposed Grimes County hotel occupancy tax increase under Texas Tax Code Chapter 352.

Bill Keese

Self

Galveston, TX

Dear Representative Leo Wilson,

As a former member of the Texas House of Representatives and a resident of Galveston, Texas, I am writing in support of your House Bill 5596, which will ensure Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) revenues are spent as originally intended, to promote tourism and support of the hospitality industry in coastal cities such as Galveston.

Tourism is a fundamental ingredient for growing our local economy, supporting small businesses, creating jobs, and funding important amenities that benefit both residents and visitors. When the City Council of Galveston voted to divert HOT revenue away from the Galveston Park Board of Trustees and assumed total control of the funds, they voted to undermine the long-term health of Galveston and our future as an economically viable part of the State of Texas.

HR 5596 requires cities to follow existing state law by tying the voter-approved tax rate to how HOT revenue is allocated. In so doing, your bill promotes transparency and ensures funds are directed to local tourism programs, such as those managed by the Galveston Park Board. It helps to ensure that we continue to maintain beaches, attract visitors, and enhance the overall experience of our community. The enactment of your bill will ensure that Galveston continues to be both a great place to live and a wonderful island to visit.

Thanks for introducing this important legislation that keeps tourism dollars working for Texas.

Sincerely,
Bill Keese

Paulie Gaido

Self, Retired
Galveston, TX

Dear Representative Leo Wilson,

I am old enough to remember fences across beaches and was thrilled when the Open Beaches Act became Texas law in 1959. What we learned in the early 60's was, despite the law, beaches full of trash and debris, smelling of rotten fish and seaweed, aren't open beaches at all. Thankfully the Texas Legislature provided a means of producing revenue to not only clean beaches but provide much needed lifeguards. My Dad was an original member of the Galveston Park Board of Trustees and was positively thrilled when the HOT was enacted. He warned me, however, saying:

"Son, be forewarned, this HOT is not going to produce much money in the beginning, but eventually will raise, annually, millions of dollars. When that happens, there may be those who see the HOT as a source of revenue for purposes that have nothing to do with Texas beaches. These people, whoever they are, may even claim that if the HOT is under their control the beaches will be safer and cleaner. Be very skeptical of such a claim. Ask yourself, why do these people want to control the HOT? Remember, when you are fighting for the proper use of the HOT funds you are fighting for Texas families and above all, Texas children, with sand buckets and toy shovels, smiling, laughing and enjoying, as young Texans, their beach birthright"

Just as delayed justice is not justice, so also are dirty, unsafe, beaches not OPEN beaches. Members of the Texas Legislature, please support SB 2532 and 2779, and HB 5596. As always, the people of Texas are counting on your good judgment.

Sincerely,
Paulie Gaido

Rhonda Gregg Hirsch

Self

Galveston, TX

Dear Representative Leo Wilson,

As a Galveston “local” and costal champion, I am writing in support of House Bill 5596, which helps ensure Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) revenues are spent as originally intended, to promote tourism and support the hospitality industry in coastal cities such as Galveston.

Tourism plays a critical role in our local economy, supporting small businesses, creating jobs, and funding amenities that benefit both residents and visitors. When HOT revenue is diverted, it undermines the health of Galveston and our future as an economically viable part of the state. Dedicated coastal funds should be spent solely for coastal needs and should have a resolute coastal steward such as the Park Board of Trustees ensuring that happens.

HB 5596 encourages cities to follow existing state law by tying the voter-approved tax rate to how HOT revenue is allocated. It promotes transparency and ensures funds are directed to local tourism programs, such as those managed by the Galveston Park Board. It helps to ensure that we continue to maintain beaches, attract visitors, and enhance the overall experience of our community. It is the reason so many people, myself included, love to call Galveston home or love visiting year after year.

Please support this important legislation that keeps tourism dollars working for Texas.

Sincerely,

Rhonda Gregg Hirsch '80

Scott Gordon

Self

Galveston, TX

Dear Representative Leo Wilson,

I am writing this letter in support HB 5596 which will ensure Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) revenues are spent as originally intended to promote tourism and support the vital hospitality industry in Texas coastal communities such as Galveston. For communities like Galveston, beaches are a true natural treasure enjoyed by visitors and local residence. Tourism drives the local economies. In Galveston alone, over 12,000 jobs are created by local hotels, restaurants, and shops that rely on the millions of annual tourists who come to enjoy our Texas beaches. HB 5596 does not introduce a new tax nor change the amount of HOT collections alleviating concerns about additional financial burdens on taxpayers. Instead, this legislation encourages cities to follow existing state law by tying the voter-approved tax rate to how HOT revenue is allocated. It promotes transparency and ensures funds are directed to local tourism programs such the ones managed by the Galveston Parks Board.

HB 5596 will help ensure the Galveston Park Board can continue to attract visitors and support our coastal community residences by enhancing overall beach experience. The Park Board of Trustees can ensure that our coastal communities continue to flourish, creating a win-win situation for both local residents and visitors alike. This bill is crucial for strengthening tourism dollars working in the local communities. I urge the legislature to pass HB 5596 thereby securing the future of Texas beaches and the communities that rely on them.

Sincerely,

Scott D Gordon