

HB 2513 | SB 2185

Sponsored by: Representative Rusty Grills | Senator John Stevens

Updating Tennessee's Regional Tourism Endowment Grant to Match Today's Reality

30-sec Pitch:

The Regional Tourism Endowment Grant hasn't been adjusted since the 1970s – despite decades of inflation and rising marketing costs.

Tourism is one of Tennessee's strongest economic drivers, bringing in outside dollars that support jobs, small businesses, and local communities without taxing residents.

This bill simply modernizes a proven program so regions like Northwest Tennessee can continue delivering strong economic returns for the state.

90-sec Pitch:

The Regional Tourism Endowment Grant was created in the 1970's to ensure every part of Tennessee has the resources to market tourism and grow local economies through visitor spending. Since its creation, the funding level has never been adjusted for inflation – even as marketing costs, staffing needs, and travel competition have dramatically increased.

For Northwest Tennessee and the other RTOs, this funding is a key funding source that amplifies our regional impact – from producing visitors guides and digital campaigns to supporting local festivals, attractions, and small businesses that depend on tourism dollars.

Tourism is real economic development. It brings in money from outside Tennessee, supports thousands of jobs, and strengthens rural communities without raising taxes on residents.

This bill simply updates the Endowment Grant to reflect today's economic realities – allowing regions to continue generating strong returns on investment for the state. It's not a new program. It's a smart, responsible adjustment to protect a proven one.

Key Talking Points

WHY THIS MATTERS

- The Endowment Grant has been flat for over 50 years
- Marketing, media, labor, and tourism competition have all increased significantly
- RTOs are doing more with the same dollars – and reaching a breaking point

TOURISM = SMART ECONOMIC DEV.

- Brings outside dollars into Tennessee communities
- Supports small businesses, restaurants, hotels, and attractions
- Creates jobs without raising local taxes

PROVEN RETURN ON INVESTMENT

- Every region uses funding for measurable marketing efforts
- Visitor spending directly impacts local economies
- Rural communities benefit especially from statewide visibility

WHAT WE'RE ASKING FOR

- A modest inflationary adjustment – not a new program
- Keeps Tennessee competitive in tourism marketing
- Protects the success of a proven economic engine