



# The Florida House of Representatives

## Office of the Speaker

**Richard Corcoran**  
**Speaker**

August 25, 2017

Via U.S. Mail and Email

Ms. Rita Erwin  
Chairperson  
Florida Keys & Key West Tourism Development Council  
1201 White Street Suite 102  
Key West, FL 33040  
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Ms. Rita Erwin,

It has come to my attention that Florida Keys & Key West Tourism Development Council has recently attempted to distance itself from VISIT Florida and intends to sever its long-standing association with VISIT Florida. This futile attempt to shield financial information from public scrutiny required by the transparency and accountability provisions of House Bill 1A is not acceptable. The Legislature passed these important reforms and accountability measures to ensure that money taken from the taxpayer – nearly \$1 billion in taxpayer funds – is spent in a transparent and accountable manner. The disclosure requirements of House Bill 1A are not onerous. The bill only requires local tourist development entities to report their direct expenditures, including salary data, to satisfy the statutory reporting obligations.

Rather than following VISIT Florida's lead and embrace the financial transparency and accountability measures currently in use by Visit Florida, Florida Keys & Key West Tourism Development Council has instead opted to remove itself from partnership agreements with VISIT Florida in a vain effort to hide taxpayer-financed activities from the public. The fact that Florida Keys & Key West Tourism Development Council is so concerned about what this financial information would reveal is further evidence that immediate oversight is necessary. The revocation of partnership agreements with VISIT Florida in no way protects your organization from Legislative inquiry, accountability or transparency. If an organization takes one dime of taxpayer money, the Legislature has the absolute authority to review expenditures and we will push forward to review any entity that attempts to sever ties with VISIT Florida.

As you know, I am entrusted to use taxpayer funds for the good of all Floridians. As such, I am committed to safeguarding those funds. Because local tourist development entities receive far more taxpayer funds than Visit Florida – nearly \$1 Billion vs. \$76 million – I will be doubling my efforts to

ensure that we are fiscally conservative in the use of taxpayer funds funneled to tourist development entities so that the public knows exactly what they are getting for their money.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Corcoran', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Richard Corcoran  
Speaker