



**SENATE STUDY COMMITTEE
MAKING GEORGIA THE NO. 1 STATE FOR TOURISM AGENDA**

**Valdosta – October 15, 2025
Breakfast 8:15 AM | Meeting Begins 9:00 AM**

Agenda Highlights

9:00 AM – Welcome and Opening Comments (20 mins)

- Mayor Scott Matheson / Chairman Bill Slaughter (5 mins)
- Dave DiSalvo, CEO, Visit Valdosta (15 mins)

Presentation: “Valdosta/Lowndes County: Georgia’s Southern Gateway”

- Overall impact of tourism on the local economy and ripple across South Georgia
- ROI of an expanded conference center across South Georgia
- Michael Owens, President/CEO, Tourism Leadership Council (10 mins)

The Hotelier Experience in South Georgia (20 mins)

- Paul McNeal, Williams Hotel Group
- David Motley, MotManCo, Inc.
- Danial Bayman, The McKey
- Jaime Phelps, Book and Table Inn

The Workforce Element of Tourism (5 mins)

- Jason Van Nus, Director of Work-Based Learning & Youth Apprenticeship Programs, Lowndes County Schools

Local Tourism Anchors in South Georgia (30 mins)

- Wild Adventures Theme Park (Herschend Family Entertainment) – 10 mins
- Kim Benarket, Executive Director, Okefenokee Swamp Park, Inc. – 5 mins
- Valdosta Wake Compound – 5 mins
- Recoil Trampoline Park – 5 mins
- South Georgia Motor Sports Park – 5 mins

Arts & Education Tourism (25 mins)

- Valdosta State University – 15 mins
 - Peach State Summer Theatre
 - Valdosta Symphony Orchestra
 - Blazer Athletics
- Turner Center for the Arts / Coleman Imagination Station – 5 mins
- WWALS Suwanee Riverkeeper – 5 mins

Entertainment Tourism (15 mins)

- Matt Campbell, Entertainment & Tourism Alliance of Georgia

Committee Discussion (10 mins)

Break (15 mins)

Innovative Models & Partnerships in South Georgia Tourism (10 mins)

- Azalea Sprinter / Nashville Farmers Market (5 mins)

Tourism & Healthcare Collaboration (10 mins)

- Ronnie Dean, CEO, SGMC Health
 - Growing medical education offerings & conference tourism in South Georgia

Agritourism (20 mins)

- Sunbelt Ag Expo
- Georgia Agri-Business Council – Will Bentley
- Trevor Santor, Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Panel Discussion: Policy Perspectives on Tourism & Agriculture (30 mins)

- Will Bentley, Georgia Agri-Business Council
- Department of Revenue (DOR)
- Jay Carter
- Moderator: Adam Bellflower

Remarks (10 mins)

- Senator Russ Goodman

Committee & Staff Discussion of Recommendations (15 mins)

Adjourn – 12:00 PM