

Georgia State Senate Committee on Making Georgia the No. 1 State for Tourism

Meeting 3, Valdosta GA

October 15, 2025

❖ 9AM Welcome and Opening Comments, Chairman Echols

❖ Agritourism (30 Minutes)

- Will Bentley, Executive Director, Georgia Agribusiness Council
- Adam Bellflower, Legislative Director, Georgia Farm Bureau
- Cheryl Smith, Georgia Department of Agriculture

❖ Valdosta/Lowndes County: *Georgia's Southern Gateway*

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

❖ South Georgia Hoteliers (20 Minutes)

- Paul McNeal, Williams Hotel Group
- Daniel Bayman, The McKey
- Jaime Phelps, Book and Table Inn

❖ The Workforce Element of Tourism in South Georgia (5 Minutes)

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

❖ Local Tourism Anchors in South Georgia

- John Fitzgibbons, Wild Adventures Theme Park (Herschend Family Entertainment) (10 Minutes)
- Kim Bednarek, Executive Director, Okefenokee Swamp Park Inc. (5 Minutes)
- Luke Tilt, Co-Owner, Valdosta Wake Compound (5 Minutes)
- Trent Coggins, Owner, Recoil Trampoline Park (5 Minutes)
- Raul Torres, Owner, South Georgia Motor Sports Park (5 Minutes)

❖ Arts/Education Tourism

- Valdosta State University (15 Minutes)
 - o Duke Guthrie, Peach State Summer Theatre
 - o Doug Farwell, Valdosta Symphony Orchestra
 - o Troy Katen, Blazer Athletics
- Sementa Mathews, Executive Director, Turner Center for the Arts (5 Minutes)

❖ Committee Discussion (10 Minutes)

FIFTEEN MINUTE BREAK

❖ Recreational Tourism

- Trevor Santos, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Natural Resources (20 Minutes)
- John Quarterman, Executive Director, WWALS Suwanee Riverkeeper (5 Minutes)

❖ Entertainment Tourism (15 Minutes)

- Matt Campbell, Entertainment & Tourism Alliance of Georgia

❖ Innovative Models & Partnerships in South Georgia Tourism (10 Minutes)

- Hayden Hancock, City of Nashville, Azalea Sprinter/Nashville Farmers Market (5 Minutes)
- Ronnie Dean, CEO, SGMC Health (10 Minutes)

❖ Senator Russ Goodman (10 Minutes)

❖ Committee and staff discussion of recommendations (15 Minutes)

❖ Meeting Adjourns