



February 23, 2017

Dear Legislators:

On behalf of the New Orleans Convention and Visitors Bureau, I am writing this letter in support of extending the sunset provision of the Louisiana Tax Free Shopping Program (LTFS). Act 435 of the 2012 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature is set to expire, and a new bill to renew the LTFS program is being submitted in the upcoming 2017 Regular Session.

The Tax-Free Shopping Program is an essential tool used to entice international visitors to visit New Orleans and Louisiana. The U.S. Department of Commerce's National Travel & Tourism Office within the International Trade Administration announced a 37% increase in international visitors to New Orleans in 2015, making us the number one U.S. city for growth in inbound foreign travel. The State of Louisiana's international inbound volume also grew substantially in 2015, an estimated 36% over 2014. LTFS allows our city and state to remain competitive as an international destination.

Shopping is a main activity of travelers to our area, and is especially popular with the Chinese market. The New Orleans CVB is pursuing the Chinese travel market as it is the fastest growing inbound travel market to the United States and currently the third-largest overseas inbound market, projected to rank number one by 2021. The Tax-Free Shopping Program will encourage the Chinese market and other international visitors to spend even more.

We expect to see another boost in international visitation with the new direct flights from Germany on Condor Airlines and from London on British Airways. These flights will permit passengers from more than 130 European destinations to fly direct to New Orleans. The Louisiana Tax-Free Shopping program makes these out-of-country travelers feel welcome, while boosting the economy of our state. I fully support the renewal of the Tax Free Shopping Program.

Sincerely,

Stephen Perry
President and CEO
New Orleans Convention and Visitors Bureau