

ASTA Declares Victory Against Massachusetts Hotel Tax Proposal

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ASTA continued its unbroken record in its fight against anti-travel agent tax provisions at the state level today when Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick signed the Massachusetts corporate tax bill, minus a provision that would have taxed travel agents' service fees for online booking of hotel rooms in the Commonwealth.

Had the original provision passed, it would have meant an unprecedented double tax on travel agencies' income stream, posing a serious threat to hundreds of traditional agencies in Massachusetts, 98 percent of which are small businesses.

"Our ongoing success at the state level boils down to the hard work of ASTA's grassroots membership and local leadership such as ASTA's New England Chapter President, Mike Spinelli, Jr. and the invaluable assistance of the Interactive Travel Services Association," said Cheryl Hudak, CTC, ASTA president and CEO. "In the case of Massachusetts, members responded to this threat with letters, phone calls, and personal visits to the state house to signal their opposition.

"We heard from multiple sources, each confirming that the grassroots efforts of individual travel agents made all the difference in this fight. And, in the end, the conference committee negotiators removed the offending provision from the final version of the bill. One ASTA member agent even received a personal phone call from his state senator to inform him that the provision had been deleted. I think that's a real testament to what can happen when people are actively engaged in the political process."

Members of the Massachusetts Chapter of ASTA leapt into action following the Massachusetts Senate's decision to adopt language taxing travel agents' service fees when booking hotel rooms online in the Commonwealth. Massachusetts would have been the first state in the nation to pass this harmful tax and subject agents' income stream to double taxation. This provision, if passed, would have driven tourism—a key economic engine—away from Massachusetts.

For additional information on the Massachusetts tax bill, please visit ASTA.org or contact Colin Tooze, vice president of government affairs, at ctooze@asta.org.

The mission of the American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA) is to facilitate the business of selling travel through effective representation, shared knowledge and the enhancement of professionalism. ASTA seeks a retail travel marketplace that is profitable and growing and a rewarding field in which to work, invest and do business.

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