



10 PARISHES  
Jefferson  
Orleans  
Plaquemines  
St. Bernard  
St. Charles  
St. James  
St. John the Baptist  
St. Tammany  
Tangipahoa  
Washington

March 15, 2016

Dear Members of the 2016 Legislative Delegation:

On behalf of Greater New Orleans, Inc. [GNO, Inc.], the regional economic development alliance for the 10-parish region of southeast Louisiana, I am writing this letter in support of extending the sunset provision of the Louisiana Tax Free Shopping Program, as Act 435 of the 2012 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature is set to expire.

Tourism is a major Louisiana industry which positively impacts the economy of our state, generating \$11.2 billion in annual spending for Louisiana businesses. The Tax Free Shopping Program is an essential marketing tool used to encourage international tourists to visit Louisiana by offering a sales tax refund on qualified purchases. International visitors, on average, spend 20% more than their domestic counterparts and stay two to three days longer at their destinations. The Louisiana Tax Free Shopping Program gives our state an added advantage in attracting international visitors, who in 2015, spent nearly \$42 million.

In summary, the Louisiana Tax Free Shopping Program plays an essential role in strengthening the economic ties between our state and the many other countries that choose to visit and conduct business in Louisiana. As GNO, Inc. continues efforts to secure non-stop international connectivity to and from Louisiana – and on the heels of Copa Airlines starting new direct service from the Louis Armstrong International Airport to Panama City, Panama - we fully support the passage of legislation to extend the Louisiana Tax Free Shopping Program during the Regular Legislative Session of 2016.

Sincerely,

Michael Hecht  
*President and CEO*