

Florida State Parks Foundation Seeks Specialty License Plate to Support Florida State Parks

About \$1 billion dollars is needed to reinvest in aging infrastructure and provide needed facilities

TALLAHASSEE, FL, UNITED STATES, January 27, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Florida State Parks Foundation has won bipartisan support in its bid to get a specialty license plate to support Florida's award-winning state parks.



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Senator Dennis Baxley

"We are delighted that bills have been filed in both the Senate and the House which if passed, will authorize a specialty license plate to provide significant and ongoing funding to enable us to protect and preserve Florida's state parks," said Foundation President Gil Ziffer.

Senate Bill 676 was filed by Republican Senator Dennis Baxley (SD 12), and House Bill 249 was filed by Democratic

Representative Allison Tant (HD 9).

"Florida's state parks are a treasure that need to be protected for future generations, but this will require significant and ongoing funding. I am delighted to support a specialty Florida State Parks license plate which would provide some of this much needed funding," said Senator Baxley.

"Although our state parks are the only four-time National Gold Medal winners for excellence, there is much that needs to be done to ensure they continue to be recognized as world leaders. Funds from a specialty license plate will help us achieve this," said Representative Tant.

About \$1 billion dollars is needed to reinvest in aging infrastructure and provide needed facilities in parks yet to be developed. Part of the Foundation's mission is to support the Florida Park Service and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection with this task. A specialty Florida Park Service license plate would provide much needed funding for this effort.

The statistics are both daunting and impressive. The Florida Park Service manages 800,000 acres of land for public recreational use. The 175 state parks contain 948 historic structures and more than 1,500 archaeological sites all of which must be protected and preserved. There are more than 100 miles of pristine beaches, thousands of miles of hiking, biking, equestrian and paddling trails, 2,769 miles of roads, 171 bathhouses, 363 restrooms, 570 pavilions – and even four

lighthouses.

Florida's state parks also play a key role in Florida's tourism and economy. State parks attracted 28 million visitors in 2019 and generated almost \$3 billion in local and statewide economic impact, generating over \$205 million in state sales tax and creating over 48,622 jobs.

"As 2020 clearly demonstrated, Florida's state parks play an important role in providing open spaces where people can recreate and exercise in a safe, socially distanced environment. The demand for these open spaces will continue to increase as Florida's population is expected to top 23 million by 2025 and tourism numbers grow," said Ziffer.

To meet this growing demand, it is important that state parks continue to provide exceptional value in terms of visitor experience and the range of outdoor pursuits available. It is also important that these pursuits are available to the widest possible audience both in terms of accessibility and diversity, he added.

The Foundation, founded in 1993 as Friends of Florida State Parks and renamed in 2018, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation whose mission is to support and help sustain the Florida Park Service, its 175 award-winning parks and trails, local Friends groups and more than 20,000 park volunteers.

It does this through programs that preserve and protect state parks, educate visitors about the value of state parks, encourage community engagement and active use of state parks, and advocacy.

The volunteer Board of Directors represents private and public sectors as well as local and statewide interests.

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