

# NEWS RENSSELAER COUNTY LEGISLATURE

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### **Tourism Fund Idea Shot Down**

A Democratic resolution to establish a Tourism Development Fund was defeated in committee Monday, according to prime sponsor Troy Legislator Peter Grimm. GOP Troy legislators Bob Mirch and Laura Bauer voted against the measure in Arts Committee, preventing the legislation from going to the floor for a vote.

The Democratic proposal called for putting unanticipated bed tax revenue into a dedicated tourism grant fund. "We see this idea as a solid first step in investing in the county's tourism industry," said Grimm. He introduced the resolution in response to requests from citizens who want to see more effort put into tourism.

Grimm, a member of the County's Tourism Committee, noted that several new hotels being built throughout the county would help to generate additional bed tax revenue and provide funds to promote local tourism projects.

Currently all bed tax revenue goes into Rensselaer County's general fund, unlike other area counties: In Schenectady County 95% of its bed tax goes to the arts. Albany raised its bed tax to 5% in 2006, with 4% for Times Union Arena debt and 1% for the Albany Convention & Visitors Bureau. Rensselaer and Schenectady Counties currently have a 4% bed tax, with Saratoga County at 1%.

Democratic Legislator Flora Fasoldt said, "Recent statistics from the New York State Association of Counties indicate that for every dollar invested in tourism, there will be a \$7 return to the local economy. Rensselaer County needs to encourage tourism to relieve the tax burden on our residents."

According to Grimm, "Our proposal would not have cost taxpayers a nickel," noted Grimm. "This had the potential for growing the county's tourism industry and contributing greatly to our local economy."

He expressed disappointment in the "Majority's unwillingness to recognize the potential advantages that this legislation could offer—especially when counties throughout the state are making commitments to re-energize tourism and are reaping the financial benefits."