



# Newsletter From Rep. Stephen Meeks District 42

April 19, 2019

## Growing our Tourism Industry



When we pass legislation to grow our economy, it does not stop at tax incentives and workforce training.

In Arkansas, we know our economy can also grow by bringing in people from out of state to appreciate our natural resources, our talents, and our history.

The hospitality industry is the second largest industry in the state. It is a \$5.6 billion industry and employees over 100,000 people.

From encouraging investment in our historic buildings to designating a scenic highway, we passed several pieces of legislation aimed at promoting tourism in the 2019 Regular Session.

Act 292 designates certain routes in Central and Southwest Arkansas as the "Camden Expedition Scenic Highway". The Camden Expedition Scenic Highway guides a Civil War tourist through southern and central Arkansas connecting five battlefields and other Civil War historic sites.

Act 601 states that the fourth Saturday in July shall be known as "National Day of the Cowboy" to commemorate America's cowboy heritage. The vaquero spirit of competition among ranch cowboys and cowgirls is reflected in rodeo events throughout the state that contribute to tourism and the economy.

Act 546 states that each year before September 1, the Governor shall issue a proclamation proclaiming September 1 Arkansas Music Appreciation Day.

The legislation also states "The General Assembly finds that Arkansas has a proud history of contributing music and musicians to the nation, including Johnny Cash, B. B. King, Glen Campbell, Charlie Rich, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Al Green, Conway Twitty, Floyd Cramer."

Act 812 allows cities in wet counties to pass an ordinance creating temporary or permanent designated entertainment

districts. Rules that prohibit a person from possessing an alcoholic beverage outside of an establishment would not apply within a designated entertainment district.

Act 671 creates the ATV Tourism and Trail Expansion Study. The purpose of the study is to make recommendations to the General Assembly regarding the creation, development, and implementation of a statewide all-terrain vehicle trails system utilizing existing state roads to connect forest roads and all-terrain vehicle trails in national forests in order to increase all-terrain vehicle tourism and economic development in the state. The House and Senate Agriculture, Forestry, and Economic Development Committees will meet to begin the study this year.

Act 818 designates Washington, Arkansas as the birthplace of the Bowie Knife, Arkansas Heritage Site.

Act 886 authorizes a \$5 increase for special permits to trout fish and lifetime trout stamps. The money will be used to make necessary renovations for hatcheries damaged by floods. The trout industry in Arkansas generates an estimated \$180 million in revenue every year.

Act 855 creates the Arkansas Major Historic Rehabilitation Income Tax Credit Act, creating a tax credit of 25% of the total rehabilitation costs for projects with a minimum investment of \$1.5 million.

Act 1066 creates the Arkansas Delta Music Commission within the Department of Arkansas Heritage. The commission will develop, implement, and administer a tourism program based on art projects that focus on highlighting music stories and related dynamics on the designated music highways in the state. Music highways in the state include Rock 'n' Roll Highway 67, the Louis Jordan Memorial Highway, the Levon Helm Memorial Highway, the Sister Rosetta Tharpe Memorial Highway, the Americana Music Highway, the Johnny Cash Memorial Highway, and the Delta Rhythm & Bayous Highway. The commission will also create a signage program that captures the stories and points of interest in blues, rock and roll, jazz, rockabilly, soul, hip hop, opera, country, and gospel music throughout the Arkansas Delta.

If you are planning a summer vacation, be sure to check out what all our state has to offer. Visit [www.arkansas.com](http://www.arkansas.com).