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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Baton Rouge residents to vote on hotel occupancy tax measure on December 10**

*Proceeds would be generated primarily by visitors while positively impacting tourism in Baton Rouge*

November 17, 2016—Baton Rouge, La.—On December 10, East Baton Rouge Parish residents will be asked to vote on a proposition authorizing a two percent hotel occupancy tax increase that would be added to hotel guests' nightly room rate. Proceeds from this tax would produce an estimated \$2.6 million each year, split equally to fund tourism efforts in the Baton Rouge area allowing Baton Rouge to compete with other cities for tourism while supporting the more than 7,000 local jobs impacted by tourism-related events and activities.

"Everyone in Baton Rouge is affected positively by tourism – from being able to enjoy popular artists, acts, concerts and sporting events to the impact felt by our local businesses, hotels, restaurants and shops when visitors are spending dollars in our Baton Rouge economy," said Paul Arrigo, Visit Baton Rouge President & CEO.

The passage of this hotel occupancy tax increase measure would create new sources of funding for tourism-related efforts while shifting the burden of an estimated \$1 million from the City-Parish annual budget each year that currently goes toward tourism-related initiatives, thereby freeing up general fund and sales tax dollars for road projects, bridges, sidewalks, police cars and more.

"The River Center is the anchor for Entertainment and Enrichment for the Capital Region, and the reality is that it was built in 1977, with very few upgrades. Our industry is competitive and for Baton Rouge to attract larger conventions and concerts, we desperately need to bring the facility up to current standards," said Michael Day, Raising Cane's River Center General Manager. "This measure would create a recurring revenue stream each year, paid mostly by the out of town visitors coming here, that would allow us to upgrade our facility to be the premiere regional venue for the type of marquee events that we deserve."

Tourism is a significant revenue and quality-of-life generator for Baton Rouge, producing or supporting:

- \$875 million in annual domestic visitor spending – dollars spent in Baton Rouge area businesses ranging from local shops and hotels to restaurants and attractions

- 3.89 million visitors each year, including a diverse mix of leisure travelers who bring their children and stay overnight as well as business meeting and convention attendees
- 280 conventions and meetings in 2015 alone, which resulted in 100,000 individual visitors who, on average, stay more than three nights while in Baton Rouge
- \$151.6 million in annual payroll for East Baton Rouge Parish businesses impacted by the local tourism industry
- 7,000 jobs created directly and indirectly through tourism in Baton Rouge

Specifically, the portion of this hotel occupancy tax increase dedicated toward increasing tourism for the Baton Rouge area would go toward:

- Assuming current tourism-related expenses from the City-Parish annual budget and shifting the burden of those expenses to visitors as opposed to Baton Rouge residents, including funding for the Baton Rouge Film Commission, the City-Parish rental waiver program used to offset costs associated with large meetings or conventions, and incentive dollars traditionally used to attract larger exhibitions or events;
- Creating incentive packages to better compete for visitor-driven events that bring in regional, national and international visitors;
- More effectively competing for sporting events currently overlooking Baton Rouge due to competitive cities' ability to offer greater and more compelling incentives;
- Helping to grow existing events to drive more visitors where a substantial economic impact and return on investment is thereby generated for the Baton Rouge area; and
- Developing and implementing marketing campaigns during times of the year where visitation is low in order to drive and generate business for area businesses during these slower periods.

For more information on this hotel occupancy tax increase proposition, how it would be paid for, what it is designed to fund, and how it would benefit the Baton Rouge economy and quality of life for Baton Rouge residents, please visit [visitbatonrouge.com/election](http://visitbatonrouge.com/election).

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*The information is provided for educational and informational purposes only and does not constitute an endorsement or opposition of this ballot measure on the part of Visit Baton Rouge.*