

Tax on hotel bills up for vote Jan. 29

By Mayor Phil Fisher

The need to promote Clinton, from St. Louis to New Orleans/Atlanta to Dallas, is a very important part of our efforts to inform potential visitors and tourists that our community is the place to stop when traveling I-20. Drawing them to Clinton to eat, stay and buy enhances our economy, and I want to aggressively move to capture those dollars.



Special to The Clinton Courier

Currently, Clinton adds 2% to every hotel bill as a tourism tax to promote our city. This generates \$200,000 per year. On January 29, the City will open the polls and ask the citizens to pass an additional 1% tax on hotel bills (only) to increase the tourism dollars for city promotion by \$100,000. To be clear, this increase is paid by those travelers staying in our city's hotels - not the citizens of Clinton.

As you know, this very common practice is used throughout the country for both hotels and restaurants. When you travel, almost every community adds local taxes to your bill at both restaurants and hotels. The difference is that Clinton does not have an additional tax for restaurants, only hotels.

All money gained from this additional hotel tax will be applied to advertising Clinton.

Our strategy includes targeting online searchers planning historical visits to Jackson, Vicksburg or Natchez - geo-targeted patrons of key historical

destinations in the state for awareness and conversion to stay, dine and explore Clinton.

City efforts will be made to leverage the existing audience of active Mississippi history seekers. By targeting online searchers seeking out keywords such as "Mississippi History Museum," "Clinton Riot," "Civil Rights Trail" or "Civil War Tours," we will be able to present the historical significance of Clinton to a primed audience. Ads will present Clinton as a central location for historical Mississippi trips.

Due to the costs of traditional media production and media placement, digital ads should achieve the most effective and measurable ROI [return on investment].

Using Google ads and targeted social media advertising, there will be promotion of the historical walking tour microsite and Clinton lodging through pay-per-click ads. Advertising buys will be seasonal based upon historical tourism data, search term relevance, and the geographic location of historical sites.

Additionally, billboards promoting the city's hospitality options will be placed along Interstates 20 and 55. Currently, three free billboards are promoting the City of Clinton between Monroe and Bolton. Additional boards will enhance the effectiveness of the three free boards currently placed along I-20.

The referendum requires a sixty percent majority of those voting January 29. I hope you see the value of promoting our city to a wider area drawing more visitors to enjoy our Historic On-Line Trail (including historic twenty markers), library Trail, the activities of Olde Towne, and our city parks.

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