

Remarks as prepared for the 2015 Conference on Tourism  
Acting Governor Kim Guadagno  
March 12, 2015

Good afternoon. Thank you for inviting me today.

This is the 5th time I've spoken to you since I became Lt. Governor on January 19, 2010, and it is again my pleasure to join you this year. As you know, one of my duties as Secretary of State is to direct the Division of Travel and Tourism. I want to take just a moment to acknowledge Anthony Minick and all his hard work while Grace Hanlon has been out on maternity leave.

To say that the New Jersey tourism industry has navigated rough waters over the past five years would be a dramatic understatement. I won't spend much time reiterating what the industry has been through.

You know that Tourism is one of the top industries in the State. This year, we again set a record with the tourism industry accounting for \$42.1 billion in economic impact – a 3.8 percent increase over last year. Visitation to New Jersey increased for the fifth straight year, with visits increasing by 4.4 percent. That is all great news. Give yourselves a hand.

We've bounced back from the economic recession. We've bounced back from Superstorm Sandy (We set record-breaking numbers since). And we'll bounce back from the storm now buffeting Atlantic City.

The good news about Atlantic City is that it remains the go-to tourist destination in New Jersey. The bad news is that the closing of some hotels and casinos has cost tourism workers their jobs.

Travel and tourism directly supports more than 315,000 jobs. When you include indirect impacts, more than a half million jobs – or 9.9% of all New Jersey jobs – depend on tourism.

For years, Atlantic City and the Jersey Shore have been the mainstays of our tourism industry. Our challenge has been to broaden our vision and spread the word about the countless other, often lesser-known, tourist and recreational opportunities in New Jersey.

And the news from across the State is great. Our non-shore counties now account for 51.2 percent of all tourism spending.

In 2014, 20 of 21 counties saw an increase in tourism industry sales. Gloucester (15.5%), Salem (11.3%) and Union (10.6%) all had double digit increases. Nine of

the top 10 counties in growth were located in the Delaware River and Gateway Regions.

I made 10 stops on my Tourism Tuesday campaign this past summer to show residents and visitors alike that New Jersey is not just about the Shore. While the Shore is an incredible place to visit and live (I'm a Monmouth County resident), Tourism Tuesday is about showing the opportunities that abound throughout the state.

In December, right before the New Year, my family and I were in Sussex County highlighting the Winter Tourism season. And this past year, more than half (51.2%) of tourism spending occurred away from the Shore.

As I said, clearly those opportunities abound, such as recreational activities from canoeing and kayaking to bird-watching from High Point in Sussex County and the Cape May fly-over. Hiking and biking may not feel sexy compared to the glitter of a Boardwalk casino, but each of these other opportunities brings visitors from one end of the state to the other and draws tourists from outside our state to restaurants, shops and cultural events in every one of our 21 counties.

Nor do we want to ignore the draw of sports and exposition locales throughout the state, like the MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford; cultural landmarks such as the NJPAC in Newark; and racetracks, county fairs and the thousands, literally thousands, of historical sites that draw visitors from all over the country to "the crossroads of the Revolution."

And the time is right. I don't know whether you read the *Wall Street Journal* article last week about the third annual National Day of Unplugging on Saturday, March 7<sup>th</sup>. The point of National Unplugging Day is that the pace of our daily lives has accelerated. We're always "on" and we're always "on call."

I won't ask how many of you leave your cell phones on beside your bed at night, because I know the answer. Being connected has become a way of life. So much so, that there's been a reaction of sorts as people seek opportunities to "Unplug and play," engage the outdoors and explore history.

And New Jersey has an untold number of alternatives to the stress of modern times. Our challenge: how do we spread the word? How do we market New Jersey in 2015?

Well, one way is to take advantage of the flip side of the Day of Unplugging. The tourist of 2015 is not the tourist of the 1970s, when the Legislature created the Division of Tourism.

We have to recognize that the 2015 visitor accesses tourism and recreation information digitally. We need to connect with those potential tourists — millennials, in particular — through the social media channels they prefer and use every day.

Make no mistake, today's history buffs may be captivated by New Jersey's vibrant past, but they're navigating their way to historic sites using their car's GPS system. When they get there, they're not looking for a print brochure; they're uploading information about those sites on their iPads and cell phones.

And when they record their experiences, they're not using their Brownie or Kodak Camera with the intention of pasting pictures into a scrapbook. No, they're hoisting a selfie stick and posting cellphone videos on Facebook, YouTube and Vine.

If New Jersey's tourism industry is to thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, it needs to adopt the tools of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. We must transform New Jersey tourism into a digital marketing powerhouse. I call on all of you to join me in launching a new era in travel and tourism marketing that embraces 21<sup>st</sup> Century technology to open the doors to a more robust sector.

Let's start in some small way right now. Let us know where you want us to visit in this summer's Tourism Tuesday tour:

- Tweet a tourism spot @LtGovGuadagno with #tourismtuesday;
- Find me on Instagram @LtGovGuadagno and tag me in a picture of your favorite New Jersey destination or use #tourismtuesday;
- Post on Visit New Jersey Facebook page, Tourism Tuesday tab; or
- Email [tourism.tuesday@sos.nj.gov](mailto:tourism.tuesday@sos.nj.gov) with a brief pitch on why we should visit you.

Let me know what your favorite summer tourism attraction is. Post your ideas for my Tourism Tuesday stops this year and win a chance for a visit. This is a great way to get us all thinking about the summer tourism season.

The projections for this year and the future are looking strong, with a forecast of more than 100 million visitors by 2017. We can make it a reality through our hard work. Together, we can show our residents, the nation and the world that there is an opportunity for enjoyment in every part of this great state.

Now it is my pleasure to introduce Mr. Josh Randle – COO of the Miss America Organization, which generates \$30 million in economic activity in Atlantic City every year. It has been wonderful having Miss America back in Atlantic City where it belongs: an iconic event for an iconic city. We hope you will stay for years to come.