



Regina Garcia-Posada
Communications Manager
Corpus Christi CVB
361.881.1875 Office
361.774.0825 Cell
rgposada@VisitCorpusChristiTx.org

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cruise Ship Legislation Filed in the House of Representatives & Senate

CORPUS CHRISTI, TX (January 6, 2011) – The 82nd legislative session of the State of Texas convenes next week with at least one focus on the Coastal Bend area. The offices of State Representative Todd Hunter and Senator Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa filed a bill in both the House and Senate on Thursday, January 6, 2011. The bills call for a joint interim legislative study from the House and Senate to develop the cruise industry in the Coastal Bend areas. Co-authors for the House Bill include local State Representatives Elect; Raul Torres- District 33, Connie Scott-District 34, Jose Aliseda-District 35, and J.M. Lozano-District 43.

This legislation will allow legislative hearings to set in motion the development of the cruise industry for the Coastal Bend area and to seek input and contact from state agencies, tourism, travel groups and cruise professionals. There will also be efforts made to obtain support from legislators in San Antonio and the Valley to join the cruise effort. This will allow a regional effort to be created and developed to organize expertise and contacts for the cruise effort. Representative Hunter has held several town hall meetings within District 32 which encompasses Nueces, Aransas, Calhoun and San Patricio Counties over the past year about the cruise ship industry. Overall feedback from constituents and the Coastal Bend area has been extremely positive, according to Hunter. The town halls have led to constructive feedback for the development of this travel and tourism effort. Hunter adds, "the cruise industry would have a positive impact on the coastal bend and the travel and tourism industry." Senator Hinojosa filed a similar bill in the Senate sending a strong message about the Coastal Bends efforts to attract the cruise ship industry to the area. Senator Hinojosa says, "as the Coastal Bend explores new economic development opportunities, this legislation is the first of many measures that can expand the scope of business in this sector. The cruise industry is diverse and requires a regional workforce to sustain it. This region is particularly well-suited to provide that support, including skilled workers, strong institutions of higher education, and access to port and transportation infrastructure."

According to the *2008 Economic Benefit of the Cruise Industry in Texas Study*, the North American cruise industry has contributed \$1.1 billion in direct spending to the Texas economy. Cruise Industry spending generated more than 18,600 jobs and \$944 million in income for Texas Workers. Tourism is the second largest private employer in Corpus Christi according to the most recent Tourism Economic Study for the city. Keith Arnold, CEO of the Corpus Christi Convention & Visitors Bureau says, "we are always looking for ways to improve our tourism product to be competitive in the industry. As the fifth most popular tourist destination in Texas it is essential to support the legislation attracting the cruise industry to our region."



A committee hearing is expected to be held within 60 days of the legislative session to address the bills according to State Representative Todd Hunter.

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The Corpus Christi Convention and Visitors Bureau's mission is "to drive overnight visitor\$ to the Corpus Christi Area". For more information about the Corpus Christi Convention and Visitors Bureau or to plan your next trip to Corpus Christi, visit www.VisitCorpusChristiTX.org or call 1-800-678-6232.