



[About Us](#)

[Issues](#)

[Billboards & Sign Control](#)

[Resources](#)

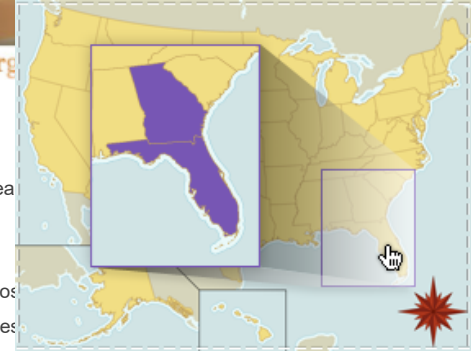
[Bookstore](#)

[Search](#)



February 2008

Get Local



In this issue:

[Take the Scenic America issues poll](#)

[News from New England is splendid](#)

[Scenic Knoxville forms as that city considers new electronic sign rules](#)

[Missouri legislator looks to rewrite sign laws as road widening looms](#)

[Bills aimed at halting digital billboards in Virginia are put on hold](#)

[Federal Highway Administration seeks byways funding proposals](#)

Take the Scenic America issues poll

A quick note at the top of this newsletter to ask you, our loyal Scenic Overlook readers, to take a moment to let us know what scenic issue is most important to you.

The results of this poll will provide insight as to what topics our supporters are most interested in, and will help guide us as we make strategic decisions about how best to deploy our resources.

[Click here for the poll.](#) Thank you for your time and assistance!

News from New England is splendid

Connecticut Governor M. Jodi Rell [issued an executive order](#) earlier this month which will prevent the renewal of contracts for billboards on state-owned land.

This action is an interim step pending a permanent legislative ban on the renewal of contracts, leading eventually to the removal of the signs from state property. Hearings on this are expected in the state legislature on Mar. 5, at which time the billboard industry will also present a counter-proposal to block the Governor's action.

Scenic America makes the news:

[Northwest Arkansas signs: enough already?](#)

[Owner of Florida electronic-billboard trucks sues state, sheriff](#)

[Two billboard companies sue Kansas City over sign ordinance](#)

[Scenic Knoxville against changes to city's billboard ordinance](#)

[Letter to the editor: Digital billboards - an aesthetic catastrophe](#)

[Legislation gives life to old billboards in Missouri](#)

The Governor's order describes billboards as "clutter," says they pose a potential distraction to drivers, and declares that they should be removed to maintain the state's "historical and natural landscape"



Hartford, Conn. skyline - photo by Vivek Nigam

As we've seen, Connecticut's busiest roads are awash in billboards and are already being lined with distracting digital signs. The Governor's order is the first step in stopping, and ultimately reversing, this blight. In fact, Gov. Rell has said "it would be nice" to get rid of all billboards in Connecticut.

Early reaction from the public and local media has been profound and positive. [This Connecticut resident](#) supports the Governor's plan wholeheartedly, as does [The Hartford Courant](#) and [Connecticut Post](#).

Scenic Knoxville forms as that city considers new electronic sign rules

[Scenic Knoxville](#), the first local affiliate of [Scenic Tennessee](#), has taken shape as the city, like many around the country, faces the encroaching threat of digital billboards.

The group was formed earlier this year by a diverse group of residents who share a passion for their city.

Scenic Quote of the Month

"Signs did not become valuable until Lady Bird Johnson in 1965, when they passed the highway

beautification bill. Up to that point, you could pretty much put signs wherever you wanted to put them. That highway bill mandated the states write outdoor advertising laws to govern the placement of signs. Once you started controlling the supply, all of a sudden they became more valuable."

~ Jerry Neighbors, co-owner of Indianapolis billboard company J&B Outdoor, in a [2008 interview](#)

Scenic Trivia Question

Q: When did the community of Bellingham, Washington enact a ban on billboards?

A: In February of 1990 the city council approved an ordinance banning all billboards in Bellingham. The council gave billboard owners six years to recoup their investments before having to remove the signs.

Tell a Friend

[Click here to tell your friends and family about Scenic Overlook and spread the word about Scenic America.](#)

Make a donation

Help support Scenic America in our efforts to preserve scenic quality and keep decisions about community character in the hands of the people living in the community.

Your tax-deductible donation helps us to provide information, support, and guidance to communities, planners, and policy makers that recognize...

Change is Inevitable, Ugliness is Not!



They've adopted a broad agenda of future goals, but for now they're focused on their first challenge: preventing the digital billboards within Knoxville city limits.

The issue has garnered a lot of attention from the local media, including [this article](#) in the *Knoxville News Sentinel* and [this video report](#) from station WBIR. The weekly paper *Metro Pulse* delves perhaps the deepest into the debate with [this article](#).

Even the press in neighboring [Kentucky](#) has weighed in on Tennessee's billboard dilemmas. David Hawpe, columnist for Louisville's *Courier-Journal*, has penned [this spirited column](#) touching on the Volunteer State's billboard blight and the potential for similar blight in Kentucky if [legislation](#) in that state's House of Representatives is passed.

New President of Scenic Tennessee

Scenic America would like to extend a warm welcome to [Leslee Dodd Karl](#), the new president of Scenic Tennessee. She assumes leadership of the group from Gene Burr, who is now on the Board of Directors with Scenic Knoxville. Thanks to Gene for all his hard work with Scenic Tennessee and congratulations and best of luck to Leslee!

Missouri legislator looks to rewrite sign laws as widening of interstates looms

Missouri State Senator Bill Stouffer is [sponsoring legislation](#) that, if passed, would deal a double blow to that state's landscapes and motorists.

The bill would allow old, nonconforming signs to be rehabilitated as new digital billboards. It would also allow for the relocation of nonconforming signs along roadways where they are displaced by construction.

It is anticipated that Interstates 44 and 70 (considered by many to be among the most blighted roads in the country) will need to undergo major widening projects in the coming years. As the law is currently written, nonconforming signs displaced by the widening would be permanently removed.

Public opinion in Missouri is against billboard proliferation, and in fact new billboard restrictions were enacted as recently as 2002. The *Kansas City Star* has just weighed in [with this editorial](#) on the issue.

"It is shameful that the powerful billboard industry is now seeking to run roughshod over local communities and back out of previous agreements that all parties understood would result in a reduction in the number of billboards over time," said Karl Kruse, President of [Scenic Missouri](#).

Scenic Missouri's formal response to the proposed legislation is [available here](#) in PDF format.



Downtown Knoxville, Tenn., photo by Gabriel Eckert



"Welcome to Missouri" - photo by Flickr user [lindsayhickman](#)

Bills aimed at halting digital billboards in Virginia are put on hold

[Scenic Virginia](#) introduced two bills during the state's recent legislative session that sought to place a moratorium on digital billboards along Virginia's roadways.



In the House, Del. Joe May (R-Leesburg) was the patron of HB 1511. In the Senate, Sen. Patsy Ticer (D-Alexandria) was the patron of SB 763. (Senate co-patrons were Senators Locke, Lucas, Puller and Whipple).



The bills were heard in the House Transportation Subcommittee and the Senate Transportation Committee, respectively. While the validity of Scenic Virginia's concerns was widely recognized, there was considerable opposition from billboard industry lobbyists and pro-billboard legislators. As a result, the bills were carried over until the 2009 legislative session.

In other news: Scenic Virginia is one of seven citizen organizations that recently [joined a lawsuit](#) to block the expansive, expensive and unnecessary widening of Interstate 81 through the Shenandoah Valley and southwest Virginia.

"The I-81 corridor contains acres and acres of our Commonwealth's most beautiful vistas and viewsheds," said Scenic Virginia Executive Director Leighton Powell. "We oppose the sacrifice of these valuable scenic resources for a road plan based on incomplete information that fails to consider rail options and other thoughtful alternatives."

Contact Us

Scenic America
1634 Eye Street NW
Suite 510
Washington, DC 20006

202.638.0550 ph
202.638.3171 fax
www.scenic.org
scenic@scenic.org

[Click here](#) for a full list of plaintiffs and the full text of the amended complaint (PDF format).

FHWA seeks byway funding proposals

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is now seeking grant proposals for the National Scenic Byways Program for Fiscal Year 2008. FHWA is particularly focusing on projects with demonstrated benefits for the byway traveler and invites the application of large-scale projects that provide strategic benefits to the byway.

These grants provide many opportunities to improve the visual character along byway corridors. Specifically, scenic conservation and land planning are among several eligible project activities for grant applications.

To find out more, contact your respective state byway program coordinator or [local byway representative](#) or get more information on the program [here](#).

Applications are due to FHWA division offices by April 11, 2008, and to FHWA headquarters by May 9, 2008.

Copyright 2008 Scenic America

[Unsubscribe](#) from this newsletter.

