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Costs to make ABC's 'Nashville' look authentic depends on taxpayers

By [Chris Butler](#) / August 16, 2013 / News / [2 Comments](#)



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By Chris Butler | Tennessee Watchdog

NASHVILLE — Tennessee officials say it makes zero sense to give taxpayer money to any film production that would shoot on location, in Tennessee, regardless of incentives.

But isn't ABC's "Nashville" a show that relies on a unique location?

As previously reported (<http://tennessee.watchdog.org/2013/07/03/hey-tennessee-taxpayers-is-hollywood-giving-you-your-moneys-worth/>), state officials gave the show \$12.5 million to continue filming on location for its second season.

Tennessee Watchdog asked the question of **Laura Elkins**, spokeswoman for the **Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development**, which oversees the program.

As Tennessee Watchdog pointed out, others in the state also have posed the question.

"That is not an assertion we are familiar with. What we heard advocates of the series say publicly is that it would not make sense to film it anywhere else based on the need to be authentic," Elkins said.

“That is much, much different than saying it would film here regardless. So, again, the assertion you are making is not one we have heard anyone make. Who made such an assertion?”

Tennessee Watchdog told Elkins that **Justin Owen**, president of the Nashville-based **Beacon Center**, a free-market think tank, discussed the matter at a widely publicized press conference in June (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iOR-X358Eag>) .

At the press conference, Owen said::

“If they are going to shoot a show called ‘Nashville’ then they are going to shoot it in Nashville. If they don’t then everybody is going to think it’s shot in Nashville, so we are going to get the same benefit,” Owen said.

Elkins responded by saying that taxpayer investment in “Nashville” offers a unique marketing opportunity for the state and that the beliefs espoused by Owen and others who agree with him are incorrect.

“In the professional opinion of our film staff, that assertion is way off base. Typically, movies and films do not film in the localities they portray. So, it is the department’s view that money spent on incentives for ‘Nashville’ were a key factor in keeping the show in Tennessee,” Elkins said.

Ben Cunningham, president of the Nashville-based **Tennessee Tax Revolt**, said Elkins and other ECD officials are “living in a bubble.”

“It’s the bizarre world of economic development where bribery with taxpayer money is represented as something good for the taxpayer. It’s giving a few bureaucrats an extraordinary amount of power to implement an agenda. It’s just absurd and should be left to the private sector,” Cunningham said.

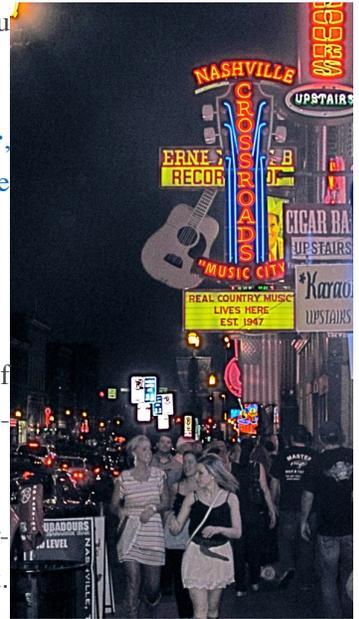
Quoting network figures, Elkins said “Nashville” reaches 8.2 million viewers nationwide.

Contact Christopher Butler at chris@tennesseewatchdog.org (<mailto:chris@tennesseewatchdog.org>) .

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ON-LOCATION: ABC’s Nashville films on location, which gives the series a certain authenticity. Pictured is Nashville’s world-famous Broadway Street (photo by Chris Butler)



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[Chris Butler](#)

Chris formerly served as staff reporter for Watchdog.org.

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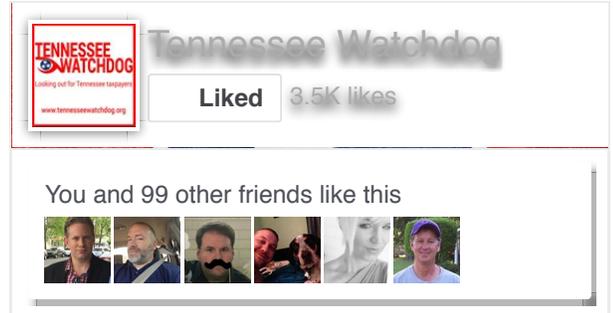
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