

# JACKSONVILLE Daily Record

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## City Council to explore funding to secure Atlantic Sun Conference basketball tourney in Jacksonville

Member Ron Salem says he has introduced legislation to help land the ASUN championships, which are currently played at school sites.

By [Ric Anderson](#) | 5:40 p.m. February 12, 2025 | 1 Free Article Remaining!



Atlantic Sun Conference basketball championships could be coming to Jacksonville.

GOVERNMENT

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Jacksonville would become the home of the Atlantic Sun Conference basketball championships under legislation on its way to the Jacksonville City Council.

Council member Ron Salem said Feb. 12 he had introduced the legislation to provide funding to move the ASUN tournament to the city. The tournament is now held at school sites.

Noting that ASUN had moved its conference headquarters to Jacksonville in 2024, Salem said, "I think it's logical that we start hosting as many of the ASUN tournaments – baseball, volleyball, whatever it is – here in Jacksonville."

"So this is the first opportunity," he said. "I hope we can show how we can run an ASUN tournament and maybe get other conference tournaments here."

A Feb. 6 report from the city Office of Sports and Entertainment said Salem and Council President Randy White had proposed committing \$100,000 per year for five years to help secure the tournament.

In an emailed statement, ASUN said it was “continuing to explore options on a potential single-site version of our Men’s and Women’s Basketball Championships. Currently, no decisions have been made but as soon as there is an update we will make sure to publicize the news through all media channels.”

The statement said ASUN last used a single-site tournament format in 2013.

Salem is a strong advocate for attracting more sporting events to Jacksonville. In 2024, he sponsored successful legislation to appropriate \$1.5 million from the Duval County Tourist Development Council to Visit Jacksonville for a concentrated effort on sports tourism development, including paying application fees and expenses for staff to travel for meeting and contract negotiations to bring events to the city.

His efforts helped lead to the creation of the Jacksonville Sports Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that launched in 2024. The organization's mission is to attract a range of events, including youth competitions, extreme sports, and college and pro events.

Salem said his goals included re-establishing Jacksonville as an NCAA Tournament March Madness site. The basketball tournament was last held in the city in 2019.



Ron Salem

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