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SCVB Action Alert

State Tourism Funding Remains At Risk – Please Voice your Concern!

This week, the Washington State House and Senate released their proposed supplemental budgets, both of which threaten to eliminate and/or undermine funding for the state tourism office:

Senate Ways and Means proposed budget:

This would cut \$3,179,000 from Tourism budget (\$750,000 from the remaining Fiscal Year 2010 budget, and \$2,429,000 from Fiscal Year 2011 budget), shutting down the tourism office until further notice.

House Ways and Means proposed budget:

This would cut the division that includes tourism (International Trade and Economic Development) by 20 percent. This proposal does not single out tourism; the level of tourism reduction would be subject to determination by the division and is therefore unclear at this time.

*** It is important to note that Governor Gregoire’s supplemental budget, which was proposed last December, preserves state tourism program funding at current general fund levels (though it reduces the International Trade and Economic Development Division’s overall budget by \$2.6 million).**

Now, the negotiations begin

The above scenario sets the stage for budget negotiations. The next two weeks will be critical for the future of state tourism funding. Ultimately, the legislature (House and Senate) will propose a budget and Governor Gregoire will approve or veto it – in full or in increments, respectively.

Tourism industry Action Items

- **Speak up!** Thank you for your communications to state legislators to date. It is important for you to continue during the next two weeks. Please voice your concerns about the proposed tourism program cuts and recommend the preservation of current funding levels.
- **Explain Why.** Explain *why tourism matters* to you, to your business, to your employees and to your community. Personal and professional testimonials matter.
- **Target Your Message.** It’s especially important to communicate with members of both the Senate and House Ways and Means Committees. While both have already heard testimony on this subject, negotiations will continue during the next two weeks. It’s not over yet!

- **“Message Forward.”** Please reach out immediately to others who are invested in our industry’s success. Share your letter or forward this one to them. Ask them to *write to Olympia!*

Some tips on distribution:

Send an e-mail. To find your legislative district and elected officials (including House and Senate Ways & Means Committee members), visit: www.leg.wa.gov

Call the Legislative Hotline: Leave a message for your state representatives and your senator at at 800-562-6000.

Message points and resources for more information:

- Tourism supports some 147,600 jobs and stimulates \$4.2 billion in earnings statewide
- Tourists spend money - \$14.2 billion in the state
- Tourists contribute nearly \$1 billion in local/state tax revenue
- According to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) produced, tourism ranks 4th as an industry, following software, aerospace and agriculture & food.
- Tourism supports existing companies
- Tourism stimulates new business development
- Hotel/motel taxes support arts and cultural institutions, sports, transportation projects and much more

For more information about the importance of the tourism industry in Washington State, visit www.whytourismmatters.com, the advocacy web site for our statewide industry. Be sure to check back for updates and subsequent action alerts in the future.

Sustained tourism marketing and promotion is vital for all us all. Please take immediate action on this issue!