



April 10, 2013

Representative Ross Hunter  
Chair, House Appropriations Committee  
315 JLOB  
Olympia, WA 98504

**Louise Stanton-Masten**  
*Executive Director*

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

- Kevin Clark - Chair**  
*Argosy Cruises*
- Cheryl Kilday – Vice Chair**  
*Visit Spokane*
- Jane Kilburn - Secretary**  
*Port of Seattle*
- John Bookwalter Treasurer**  
*Bookwalter Winery*
- Andy Olsen – Past Chair**  
*Columbia Hospitality*

**BOARD of DIRECTORS**

- Kim Bennett**  
*Vancouver USA Regional Tourism Office*
- David Blandford**  
*Visit Seattle*
- Darrell Bryan**  
*Clipper Vacations*
- Donna Cappa**  
*Tulalip Resort Casino*
- John Cedergreen**  
*Ancient Lakes Brewing Company*
- John Cooper**  
*Yakima Valley VCB*
- Cara Egan**  
*Seattle Art Museum*
- Leslie Johnson**  
*Squaxin Island Tribe Tourism Department*
- Jennifer Leavitt**  
*The Bellevue Collection*
- Dan Moore**  
*EverGreen Escapes*
- Christina Pivarnik**  
*City of Port Townsend/CP Communications*
- Drew Schmidt**  
*San Juan Cruises*
- Diane Schostak**  
*Olympic Peninsula Visitor Bureau*
- George Schweitzer**  
*Red Lion Hotels*
- George Sharp**  
*Olympia-Lacey-Tumwater VCB*
- Skip Thompson**  
*The Boeing Company*
- Monique Trudnowski**  
*Adriatic Grill*

Dear Rep. Hunter and Members of the House Appropriations Committee;

We are writing on behalf of the Washington Tourism Alliance (WTA) to express our appreciation for the inclusion of our funding request in the House budget released today. The \$500,000 appropriated each year in the 2013-15 biennial budget are essential to the continued work of the WTA in expanding and promoting the tourism industry in Washington State.

As you know, the WTA took over the role of tourism promotion following the closure of the state tourism office in 2011. As the only state in the nation currently without state support for tourism marketing, we are currently competing with other states that are spending tens of millions of dollars to attract visitors and the associated spending that comes with them. The tourism related elements in the House budget released today will provide us with the basics of a statewide tourism program for the next two years as we work to establish long-term, industry-led funding at a level that will allow us to market Washington State in a competitive manor.

Tourism is an essential industry in our state. It is Washington’s 4<sup>th</sup> largest export industry by Gross Domestic Product, with \$16.9 billion in total direct visitor spending in 2012. More than \$1 billion in local and state tax revenues are contributed by visitors to our state, equivalent to almost \$400 for every household in the state. For many communities and regions of this state, tourism represents a significant percentage of their local economy. Without a statewide marketing program and platform upon which those communities and regions can promote their attractions they will continue to lag in the economic recovery. The tourism Industry supported 153,500 jobs and created \$4.7 billion in payroll earnings in 2012.



Page 2

We extend our very sincere thanks to each of you for understanding the needs we identified that are required to advance the tourism industry, and for including our requests in your budget. We remain committed to working with you during the remainder of the legislative session to ensure that these funds are used in a manner that maximizes the number of tourists that come to Washington State. Please let us know if we can provide you with any additional information or support in any way.

Best regards;



Louise Stanton-Masten, IOM  
Executive Director



Kevin Clark  
Board of Directors Chairman

CC: Members of the House Appropriations Committee