

ASSOCIATION OF WASHINGTON STATE PUBLIC FACILITIES DISTRICTS

June 8, 2017

Dear Legislators:

On behalf of the Association of Washington State Public Facilities Districts, we urge you to support legislation (SHB1123/SSB5251) and funding of a statewide tourism marketing program in the 2017-2019 budgets.

We recognize the State's priorities for funding education and important social services; however, we need you to also put your full support behind the statewide tourism marketing program.

The small investment by the State will be matched 2-for-1 by the tourism industry and provide almost immediate returns on the investment to state coffers. The important tax and spending revenue generated by tourism will make a difference for years to come.

Dozens of Public Facilities Districts (PFDs) work hard in every region of our state to attract visitors to our publicly-owned trade and convention centers, stadiums, arenas and performing arts centers. These facilities host events that generate millions in visitor spending, contribute to local economic development, and provide jobs and tax revenue. Many of our facilities were built with bonds secured by local lodging taxes. Those funds are not available for use for marketing to bring in visitors from outside our state. We need a statewide tourism marketing program to effectively compete with our neighboring states.

Our communities do an excellent job with local lodging taxes to promote themselves but to grow tourism revenues for the state, Washington needs to have a statewide tourism marketing program that brings national and international visitors into Washington State. One of the primary goals of the legislation is to reach travelers and get them to areas of the state outside Seattle and other urban centers.

Washington is the only state in the nation without a statewide tourism marketing program. British Columbia, Oregon, Montana and Idaho are tough competitors for northwest tourism and we need to make sure Washington State has a strong voice to attract visitors. Oregon will spend \$76 million on tourism promotion. Of that, \$17 million will be on global advertising. The Provincial government will contribute nearly \$53 million to Destination British Columbia over the next two years.

Tourism is one of our best "exports" that can only be purchased and enjoyed right here at home. Tourism jobs cannot be "outsourced" and the revenue visitors bring to our communities stays there and generates local and state tax revenue. It is why we support a new statewide tourism marketing program in the 2017-2019 budgets.

Sincerely,



Mick McDowell
AWSPFD - Chair
Spokane PFD - Member

Benton County PFD

Capital Area PFD

Clark County PFD

Cowlitz County PFD

Edmonds PFD

Everett PFD

Grays Harbor County PFD

Kennewick PFD

Kent PFD

Kitsap County PFD

Lewis County PFD

Lynnwood PFD

National Flight Center

Pasco PFD

Richland PFD

Skagit County PFD

Spokane PFD

Tacoma PFD

Tri Cities Regional PFD

Vancouver PFD

Washington State CC PFD

Wenatchee PFD

Whatcom Co. Bellingham PFD

Yakima PFD