

To the Honorable Senators Braun and Ranker and Reps. Ormsby and Chandler:

On behalf of more than 3,500 retailers, the Washington Retail Association (WRA) encourages you to support funding in the state budget and accompanying legislation (SHB 1123/SBB 5251) to establish a state-wide tourism marketing program. This important issue has bipartisan legislative support as well as strong support from the retail industry.

Retailers in every community are an important part of the tourism industry. Visitors contribute to the economic well-being of small independent businesses as well as national chains, wholesalers, dealers, professional services, and mall owners and operators.

One of the primary goals of the legislation is to reach national and international travelers. The state of Oregon will spend \$76 million on tourism promotion over the 2017-19 biennium - \$17 million of that will be on global advertising. Washington has zero national or international budget.

The tourism industry in Washington has had a competitive disadvantage for the last five years. Our neighboring states have figured this out and are investing more and more money into their destinations and the reason why is because they are seeing a return on that investment. And that return on investment isn't 10-15 years down the road it's just right around the corner.

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 clear we need to return to promoting Washington to the rest of the country and the world. With bipartisan legislation now moving through Olympia we have a chance to see great returns because tourism truly works for retailers and all of Washington.

Please support a statewide tourism marketing program by passing SHB 1123/SSB 5251 and including funding for the public/private sector match in the 2017-19 budget. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jan Teague

*President/CEO
Washington Retail Association*