

To: Representative Bob Lynn
State Capitol, Room 104
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

From: Dave Worrell
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I wanted to take a moment early in the session to chat with you about my industry: Tourism.

I've spent much of my nearly three decades in Alaska helping folks enjoy our great state. Working with visitors, I'm constantly reminded what a privilege it is to be able to live here – seeing folks awestruck at the beauty of Turnagain Arm or listening to their stories of fulfilling their life-long dream of seeing Alaska – we really are blessed to be Alaskans.

While my career has led me away from providing direct services to visitors, tourism is still my livelihood. In my capacity as Director of Communications & Planning at ATIA I talk with tourism businesses across the state on a daily basis. What I hear is concern. Concern about not only the upcoming season, but about the longer-term future of their businesses.

The people I talk to recognize that the global economic crisis is already impacting their business. They are very concerned about what will happen in the next two, three, five years and more down the road. They wonder what we're doing to ensure that Alaska stays top-of-mind as a place to visit. They ask me why their TVs and magazines are filled with ads for California, New Zealand and other places but they rarely see one for Alaska – what are we doing to attract the next generation of Alaska visitors?

And I tell them the truth – ATIA spends everything we possibly can from our co-op marketing programs and from State funding but that it's just not enough to be competitive. I tell them that Hawaii just allocated more in an emergency supplemental campaign than our entire year's funding from both the public and private sector. Many cities (and most states) spend more marketing than Alaska does – in today's market, competition for visitors is intense.

That's why I'm writing you, my legislator, to ask that you help me help Alaska's tourism businesses. Alaska is one of the world's great destinations. But like a tree falling in the forest, if there is nobody there ... Alaska needs to do much more to make sure that we make a sound – that we are competitive in a global marketplace. Please, do everything in your power to build upon last year's successful effort to pass HB 147 (and thanks for your positive vote) and work to advance ATIA's long-term plan for growing Alaska's Tourism Marketing program.

Sincerely,