

February 20, 2009

Senator Gary Stevens
State Capitol, Room 103
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Senator Stevens:

I am writing to convey to you how important it is that the legislature continue (and preferably increase) funding for tourism marketing in Alaska. Tourism is important to me personally as I am employed by the Kodiak Island Convention and Visitors Bureau. My employment at the KICVB allows me and my husband to continue living on this beautiful island and to enjoy the warm community that I am quickly becoming a part of.

Perhaps more important, however, are the 200 plus members of the KICVB who rely almost exclusively on the tourism industry to support their families and remain in Kodiak. I am receiving phone calls daily from folks in Kodiak worried about the global economy. Their bookings are down; the phone is quiet. They wonder how they are going to manage to stay in business during the coming year. Many are not rehiring as many employees; others have had to take jobs off-island to survive the winter resulting in the separation of spouses and families. That's a trend we certainly do not want to see. While Kodiak proudly remains a commercial fishing village, it is imperative to keep tourism in the economic mix. With economic diversity comes a strong, balanced community that can weather any storm.

Marketing Kodiak is the number one way to ensure we remain well-positioned in the tourism market during this economic downturn. We are, quite literally, competing with the world for tourist dollars and most of the world has far greater budgets to lure visitors to their destinations. We cannot afford to lose one dime of our tourism marketing dollars; an increase in marketing is actually what is called for during difficult economic times. We cannot let the world forget that Kodiak should be on everyone's bucket list and even a year of decreased marketing efforts can have lasting negative impact.

The KICVB relies heavily on the Alaska Travel Industry Association to stretch our marketing dollars. They also provide valuable information and advice to smaller, rural areas that do not have the resources to develop their own statistic programs or other analyses. I can't emphasize enough how important the ATIA has been to me in marketing efforts for Kodiak. Their programs allow me to reach dozens of journalists for a fraction

Our B&Bs, lodges, charter fleet, coffee shops, gift shops, restaurants, air taxis, grocery stores...you name it...all benefit from tourism. Almost every family in town would be in some way impacted by a decline in tourism. Let's not let that happen. Please support reinvesting tourism related taxes into the state's tourism marketing programs. It is an excellent investment in the future of Alaska.

Sincerely,

Janet Buckingham
Executive Director