



9 February 2009

Mrs. Bettye Davis, Senator
State Capitol, Room 30
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Senator Davis:

Just last month I purchased my first home, which is in Airport Heights. I am thrilled to begin laying roots in the neighborhood and growing in the Anchorage community.

I am originally from Fairbanks and never imagined that I would one day reside in Alaska's "big city." In fact, after leaving the state to attend university on an athletic scholarship, I never thought that I would live in Alaska again.

However, after spending some time working "outside," which included a stint of employment overseas, I was lured home by Alaska's visitor industry. For my first professional job I joined the Fairbanks Convention & Visitors Bureau (FCVB). During my tenure with FCVB I developed a passionate appreciation for the vast array of experiences that Alaska has to offer to visitors – as well as a gratitude for the significant economic impact that these visitors have on the thousands of Alaskans that work in the industry, including me.

It is not guaranteed, however, that these visitors, who play such a vital role in Alaska's economy (and who help me pay for my recently acquired mortgage!), will continue to come to our great state. There are many other world class destinations that are aggressively competing for travelers' time and money; for example, while promoting Alaska at tradeshow both internationally as well as across the US, I notice with unsettling regularity that our state is dwarfed in presence by our competitors such as New Zealand and Colorado. It will take an unrelenting effort on our part to maintain and grow Alaska's market share. This can be done through increased funding for Alaska's statewide destination marketing efforts.

I now work for the Alaska Travel Industry Association (ATIA) and I am able to see firsthand, on a daily basis, the importance of reinvesting tourism related taxes into ATIA's marketing programs. Over \$20 million is needed to counter the decline in independent travelers that we've seen over the past few years. ATIA's tourism marketing programs will reverse this negative trend and insure Alaska's visitor industry thrives.

I am eagerly looking forward to a great future in Alaska; in my new home in Airport Heights. And, I hugely appreciate your support of ATIA's tourism marketing programs, which makes a future in Alaska possible for me and thousands of my colleagues.

Sincerely,


Jesse Carlstrom
Travel Trade & International Marketing Manager

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