

February 18, 2009

Dear Representative Seaton,

I write today to share with you the importance of tourism in my life and in our community. As you know, I own and operate tourism businesses in the Homer, Kodiak and Prince William Sound areas. What you may not know is that the visitor industry in Alaska has supported myself and my family for over 20 years. Not only does it put bread on my table and a roof over my head, it allows me to employ over 20 people in primarily well paying jobs. My small businesses bring new money to our communities and pay out over \$1,000,000 annually in wages and for goods and services such as lodging, boat repair and storage, groceries, and fuel. We support our community and state with many tens of thousands of dollars in sales taxes, property taxes, and license and tags fees. Furthermore, my customers spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on additional goods and services including sales taxes and vehicle rental taxes. In short, it would be difficult to drive down our streets and find a business that is not positively impacted by tourism.

As a fiscal conservative, I don't want a hand out or a bail out for myself or my industry. But what I do expect is for government to partner with the private sector for the good of the state and its people. An excellent example of this is the State's tourism marketing program. As you are aware, this program is funded with state and industry dollars with the goal of driving visitation to Alaska, which in turn provides the benefits mentioned above to the state and people of Alaska. Destination marketing is done worldwide for the simple reason that it works. Being aware of Alaska is not enough to drive visitation, the state must market itself as a destination. Alaska's tourism marketing program provides a substantial monetary return to the state as well as huge benefits to the private sector. For these reasons, I ask you to support adequate, sustainable funding for the State's tourism marketing program. If for some reason you believe that the benefits of the program do not justify funding it, I ask that you explain to me why and what evidence you would need to convince you otherwise. To not fund a program that demonstrably returns more to the state than it costs plus provides huge private sector benefits simply is bad government.

Thank you for your hard work and dedication to our state.

Roark Brown – Homer

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