

Letter to the Editor
February 3, 2009

Colorado & Local Tourism: A Smart Investment

As the state examines how to cut back its fiscal 2009/2010 budget, funding for Colorado's tourism promotion is in jeopardy. Now is the time for tourism industry members and friends to inform legislators about the importance of the state's tourism industry. The latest recommendation from the governor's office is to cut the Colorado Tourism Office's (CTO) budget by almost half, from \$19 million to \$10.4 million. This money comes from gaming revenue.

Tourism brings billions of dollars into Colorado each year and millions into our local economy. The Gunnison-Crested Butte Valley benefits from the CTO's efforts in numerous ways: cooperative advertising in publications that would be too expensive for us otherwise, media trips that bring journalists in from all over the world, press releases that include our events and lodging properties, exposure on colorado.com and state vacation guides, and so much more.

We can't afford to let the marketing momentum go away again. From 1992 to 1997, after state tourism promotion funding was eliminated, Colorado's market share of national overnight visits dropped by 30 percent. In 1997 alone, approximately \$2.4 billion in tourism revenues and \$134 million in taxes were lost.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Tourism is the second largest industry in Colorado in terms of jobs, employing 143,700 people with a payroll of approximately \$4 billion. Nearly one in four jobs in Colorado is in the tourism sector.
- In 2007, Colorado welcomed a record 28 million overnight visitors, who spent \$9.8 billion in tourism-related expenditures.
- The Colorado travel industry generated \$763 million in local and state tax revenue in 2007.
- Without the contribution of state and local taxes from tourism, every Coloradan would pay \$157 more in taxes or \$407 per each average household.
- The return on investment for tourism advertising and promotion spending is 6:1 for state taxes generated and climbs to 13:1 when including local tax generation.
- Colorado is a "Top 10 Dream Destination" and ranks 17th overall in market share among U.S. states.

To stay competitive, our state and destination needs a robust tourism promotion program. Tourism marketing is not just an expenditure; it is an investment. When entities significantly cut advertising and communications in a down period, the cost to regain market share once the economy recovers may cost four to five times as much as the cuts saved, according to the Wharton School of Business.

Please call or email your legislators today and tell them that "Tourism Works for All of Us" and ask them to support the full funding of tourism promotion. For contact information for Representative Kathleen Curry and Senator Gail Schwartz, visit www.votesmart.org. You can also visit www.gcbta.com for additional information.

Sincerely,

Joellen Fonken

President, Gunnison-Crested Butte Tourism Association