

North Dakota

Travel Alliance Partnership

**Testimony of Scooter Pursley
Executive Director, ND Travel Alliance Partnership
In Opposition to SB 2018
January 15, 2025**

Dear Chairman Wanzek and the Senate Appropriations Government Operations Division:

I am writing to you in support of Senate Bill 2018, the Department of Commerce bill, which includes funding for the Tourism Division.

My name is Scooter Pursley. I am the executive director of the North Dakota Travel Alliance Partnership (TAP). TAP is a coalition of travel industry stakeholders, including convention and visitors bureaus, state attractions, businesses and others who help make tourism the third-largest industry in North Dakota's. On behalf of the tourism industry and its partners, TAP asks that you support travel and tourism funding within SB 2018 and consider increasing the levels of funding to keep our Tourism Division within shouting distance of neighboring states.

In 2024, North Dakota Tourism had an annual budget of \$7 million compared to \$26 million in South Dakota, \$19.9 million in Wyoming, \$21.8 million in Idaho, \$35 million in Minnesota and \$19.9 million in Montana. North Dakota Tourism is holding its own despite the economic disadvantage. Imagine what it could do with proper funding and the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library coming on line in the next biennium.

The state's 25.6 million annual visitors spend \$3.3 billion, including \$307 million in visitor-paid taxes. More than 45,000 jobs in the state are in the tourism sector, which incidentally, is also a gateway to workforce recruitment and retention.

Last session, \$25 million was appropriated through Destination Development Grants and the industry responded with 81 applications asking for \$151 million. This session, \$50 million would be a starting point with hopes of more funding, to accommodate the state's needs.

As the third-largest industry in North Dakota, travel and tourism is an important component in the state's economic well-being. It creates new revenue, improves the quality of life for North Dakotans and helps retain workforce.

Please look upon this opportunity favorably and fund the Tourism Division to a level that gives our state's travel and tourism marketing experts the tools they need to keep North Dakota in the fight for visitors in a highly competitive market.

Thank you for your consideration,

Scooter Pursley | Executive Director

North Dakota Travel Alliance Partnership

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