



72 EAST MUSEUM DRIVE
DICKINSON, NORTH DAKOTA 58601
701.483.4988 | 800.279.7391
F: 701.483.9261
E: INFO@VISITDICKINSON.COM

www.visitdickinson.com

March 3, 2021

To: House Appropriations Committee

Re: SB 2018 – ND Tourism Division Budget

Dear Chairman Delzer and Committee Members,

I am Terri Thiel, Executive Director of the Dickinson Convention & Visitors Bureau.

The ND Tourism Division has been, and always will be, the marketing agent for our state's image. That ability to draw travelers to North Dakota has never been more important than now. COVID has changed our industry. The visitor industry has been turned upside down.

Our Roughrider Days Fair & Expo was cancelled, along with most of other festival events. Convention and meetings were cancelled. Sporting events may have continued, but without the people in the stands.

As a result of the lower lodging tax revenue, our CVB re-budgeted, stripped our marketing plans, and basically kept the lights on while staff worked to re-invent themselves to help our community with information related to COVID hospitality updates, grant information, what businesses were open, hours of operation, delivery options and such. We may finally be able to receive a few dollars in the second round of PPP, (we did not qualify earlier), but the amount will be minimal.

We need ND Tourism to be able to show the brand image of the state to increase awareness of ND and influence a trip to the badlands, to the safe open places in ND. Our office has always been a regional partner for the surrounding attractions, events, and small businesses, and with our paid marketing reduced, it is even more important to support the ND Tourism Division budget.

In 2020 there was a **52% increase** in ND Tourism website traffic. There is pent up demand for travel, and not to the turmoiled cities - but to our wide, open, safe places in ND.

The ND Tourism Division needs to be competitive with our neighboring State Tourism offices to reach these travel audiences, *they are so far below them.*

Please support SB 2018 ND Tourism Division budget at \$18 million/biennium.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Terri Thiel".

Terri Thiel
Executive Director

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