



MICHIGAN SNOWSPORTS INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION

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Comments for: Tourism, Outdoor Recreation and Natural Resources Standing Committee Meeting
Rep. Joel Sheltroun, Chairman
521 House Office Building, Lansing, MI
June 16, 2009, 10:30 AM

On behalf of the Michigan Snowsports Industries Association (MSIA), I am writing to express support for House Bills HB 5017, 5018, 5088 and 5089, to create permanent funding for Travel Michigan.

MSIA is the trade association that represents Michigan's ski and snowboard industry, including its ski areas, resorts, ski shops, and other related businesses. Unfortunately, today is our Annual Conference. The industry is convening at Apple Mountain in Freeland and therefore we are unable to attend.

The success of Travel Michigan's current campaign has allowed Michigan to launch its **first winter advertising campaign in 15 years**. I speak for the entire ski industry by saying we are strong supporters of Travel Michigan and the award-winning Pure Michigan campaign. Plus, **this past winter, Travel Michigan had sufficient funds to allocate \$1.8 million to promote winter travel.**

This is a great first step. However, with Travel Michigan's current projected budget, there are no plans to advertise this coming winter.

It may surprise you to note that despite our bleak economy, Michigan's ski industry is reporting only a slight decline of 2.6 percent from its prior season, which was a record year. We were bracing for much worse. **I believe that one of the key reasons for our successful season is the winter Pure Michigan ad campaign.**

In Michigan, travel for winter sporting activities is a **\$4.4 billion industry that accounts for one third of the state's leisure travel**. Think about that for a minute if you would. **WINTER ACCOUNTS FOR ONE THIRD OF MICHIGAN'S LEISURE TRAVEL. To date, 4% of the Pure Michigan campaign dollars have been directed to winter promotion.**

Advertising and promoting winter travel is a relatively cheap buy. Michigan is a regional winter destination, not a national one, and we don't need a national cable advertising schedule in order to succeed. Plus, of the four states that border us – Ohio, Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin—when it comes to winter recreation, we're the best game in town. Michigan has more ski areas than any other state except New York and more registered snowmobiles than any other state.

In addition, the jobs that the travel industry creates can't be outsourced. It would be pretty hard to move one of our ski hills to another state, or outsource the ski lift attendants that go with them! Those jobs will always stay right here. Plus, the ripple effect of our industry is felt throughout our state. Gas stations, convenience stores, ski and snowmobile outfitters, restaurants, linen services, beverage distributors and a host of other businesses rely on travelers who head for Michigan's downhill, cross country and snowmobile trails each year.

We live in a state that turns cold for four months each year. Let's celebrate this season and bring in additional revenue by showcasing winter sports to our neighboring states.

It is imperative that the momentum of the Pure Michigan campaign continues. **Furthermore, MSIA requests that any tourism-marketing fund include a stipulation requiring that a minimum of 10 percent be allocated to promoting winter tourism.** Michigan is truly a winter wonderland. After all, what is more "Pure Michigan," than our driven snow?

We appreciate your leadership respectfully request that you act on this before summer break, so we can continue to aggressively promote Michigan tourism this coming winter and beyond.

Sincerely,

Mickey MacWilliams, Executive Director