

Holperin

Senate

the Northern Advantage

PO Box 1256 • Eagle River, WI 54521 • 715.891.1412 • holperin_00@yahoo.com

Paid for by Holperin - Senate, Sandy Kinney, Treas.

Holperin Plan Would Help Local Tourism Recover From Disasters

Monday, July 21, 2008

(For more information: 715-891-1412)

Wisconsin's travel industry deserves an increase in its marketing budget, and some of the boost should be earmarked for communities where a natural disaster or other setback has harmed the local tourism economy, State Senate candidate Jim Holperin said today.

Wisconsin's third largest industry, tourism, needs another half million marketing dollars in each of the next two years in order to remain competitive, Holperin said.

"The travel industry generally doesn't qualify for tax credits or start up loans or training grants or any of the programs that benefit other business sectors," Holperin said. "The state of Wisconsin does only one thing for tourism, and that's to market Wisconsin to travelers."

"Our tourism promotion budget needs to go up by a half million dollars annually in order to keep up with rising ad rates and to keep Wisconsin competitive in a very crowded travel destination market," he added.

Holperin said the state's current tourism marketing budget is about \$11 million annually and said an increase of \$500,000 each year could be accomplished by shifting funds internally within the state's \$15 billion budget. "Travel marketing is obviously a pretty insignificant part of the overall state budget," he said, "but tourism is very important to this state's economy and the taxes and economic growth generated by our third largest industry justify an increased investment in the tourism sector."

Holperin suggested that at least 25% of the increase be earmarked for distribution to localities to assist with marketing following natural disasters or other bad luck which has hurt the local travel economy.

“We hear about these situations all the time where no snow winters or floods or tornadoes or road construction ruins a season for local tourism businesses,” Holperin said. “Some extra marketing assistance at times like this could go a long way to help local tourism recover from a rough patch more quickly, ultimately strengthening or even saving the tourism sector in some areas.”

Holperin said a tourism emergency grant program should be structured so that a committee of individuals with tourism backgrounds, appointed by the Department of Tourism, would review applications on a regular basis to insure impartiality and to judge true need.

“The state is always inclined to help in some way when a disaster occurs,” Holperin concluded. “Sometimes assistance is available, but other times it comes too late or funding isn’t available or tourism isn’t included or for some reason things just don’t work out. My plan would eliminate uncertainty by establishing a formal process with funding and an application and approval system already in place when the next emergency hits.”