



March 28, 2011

Senator Ginny Burdick, Chair
Senate Finance and Revenue Committee

Re Senate Bill 307: Transient Lodging Tax (TLT)
Public Hearing, March 30 2011

Dear Senator Burdick and members the Senate Finance and Review Committee:

The City of Ashland supports SB 307.

SB 307 expands the definition of “tourism-related services” to read: **(10) “Tourism-related services” means services provided by a city or county that have a substantial purpose of supporting tourism or accommodating tourist activities.**

Passage of this bill allows governments a more flexible use of the TLT to meet increased demands placed on both essential services and infrastructure as a result of tourism activities.

Tourism is a key sector of Ashland’s local economy. In Ashland, the number of visitor’s to our downtown and to Lithia Park swells during the peak summer season – well beyond our local population. In order to provide those visitors with a safe and inviting experience and to accommodate tourist activities, we provide the following essential services.

1. Park Patrol. We provide enhanced civilian patrol of the downtown, Lithia Park and the other core tourist areas. These people are provided ONLY because of the large number of tourists in the area. In addition to enforcing our downtown laws, they also spend about 1/3 of their time providing directions. The current cost of this program is \$20,000 per year, but before the recession forced us to cut it, the program was double the size. We could easily spend \$40,000 per year on this service.
2. Downtown Contact Station. The downtown police station is in place largely because of the need for the tourist areas of town to have enhanced law enforcement. We provide a downtown specific police officer, which costs approximately \$90,000 plus \$5,000 to rent the space for the contact station.
3. Overtime for events. We generally have 35,000 people along the parade route on July 4, which requires enhanced staffing in Police, Fire, Public Works, and Parks, most of which is overtime. This is a key event for our community, but it is much larger because of the volume of tourists. The enhanced staffing and overtime costs are approximately \$15,000 for the July 4 event. It is fair estimate to say that 30 to 40 percent of that

overtime is provided directly to support the tourists. In addition, the City accommodates numerous other special events including races, parades and festivals, which draw visitors to our community.

Tourism is a major component of Ashland's local economy and Ashland places a great value on our visitors — many of whom visit our community year after year. Expanded access to the TLT would enable the City of Ashland to continue to provide tourism-related essential services.

Sincerely,

John Stomberg, Mayor
City of Ashland