

Speaker #3

Mark Pritchard

WASHINGTON TOURISM ALLIANCE

Advocates for Washington State Tourism

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March WTA Newsletter – Governor Inslee Signs Tourism Bill!

WTA Update

Today at 2:37pm, Governor Jay Inslee signed SB 5251 into law. This moment is the result of seven years of hard work and tenacity by the tourism industry in Washington State.

Even when faced with immense obstacles, our WTA board members, legislative team, supporters and advocates never wavered in their determination to make this happen. We cannot thank you enough for your support!

With a marketing plan in hand and a bill now signed, our real task has just begun. However, to make our marketing plan a reality, there are still steps to be taken before we can begin. As you'll read in the article below, the process for selecting the Washington Tourism Marketing Authority (WTMA) will take place over the next couple of months. Once the WTMA is established, the industry will need to provide two dollars for every dollar of state funding. While the WTMA will determine the different ways match funding can be raised, membership will remain an important way to support the WTA.

In this new chapter, we must continue to build upon our strong partnerships. The challenge to reestablish a statewide tourism effort inspired the industry to come together in a way it never has before. Every sector of our industry, from every region of our state has worked together over the past seven years, and we will continue to count on that unity moving forward. We are excited for what's to come and look forward to working together to build a marketing program that will make Washington proud!

IT'S DONE...BUT IT'S JUST THE BEGINNING!

Becky Bogard and Kathryn Hedrick

On March 5, the final step in legislative approval of the statewide tourism marketing bill took place when the Senate concurred by a unanimous vote in the House changes to E4SSB 5251. At that point the bill was on its way to the governor's desk and Governor Inslee signed the bill yesterday.

The governor also signed the supplemental appropriations bill yesterday. That bill has \$1.5 million for FY 2019 to implement the new tourism marketing law.

The tourism legislation had wide legislative support. In its final form, it passed both houses unanimously. We have many legislative leaders to recognize but really all legislators deserve thanks for working with us on this journey to get a new statewide tourism marketing program established. Some deserve special recognition.

Here are just a few of the Senators who played a particularly important role:

- Sen. Dean Takko (D., Longview) – a member of the work group that help write the legislation and the prime sponsor of the bill that passed
- Sen. Christine Rolfes (D., Bainbridge Island) – a member of the work group, co-sponsor of the bill and chair of the Senate Ways and Means Committee which included funding in the 2019 supplemental budget to implement the legislation
- Sen. Sharon Brown (R., Tri-Cities) – a member of the work group and supporter of the 2018 funding and getting the bill passed
- Sen. Maralyn Chase (D., Shoreline) – chair of the Senate Trade and Economic Development Committee and co-sponsor of the bill
- Sen. Judy Warnick (R., Moses Lake) – former chair of the Senate Trade and Economic Development and co-sponsor of the bill

For the House, here are a few representatives who played a visible and vocal role:

- Rep. Cindy Ryu (D., Shoreline) – a member of the work group, co-sponsor of the House bill and chair of the House Community Development, Housing and Tribal Affairs Committee
- Rep. Cary Condotta (R., Wenatchee) – prime sponsor of the House version of the bill and member of the work group
- Rep. Gael Tarleton (D., Seattle) – a member of the work group and staunch advocate for the bill

- Rep. Andrew Barkis (R., Lacey) – co-sponsor of the House bill, a member of the work group and ranking member of the House Community Development, Housing and Tribal Affairs Committee
- Rep. Gina McCabe (R., Goldendale) – a hotelier and vocal advocate for the legislation, who helped her colleagues understand the importance of tourism
- Rep. Mike Chapman (D., Port Angeles) – advocate for the legislation because of its impact on rural areas

Again, all legislators deserve thanks. These are just a few who played a special role!

On behalf of my legislative team, I want to thank all of you who helped get this passed. Each of you played a critical role. You came to testify, you wrote letters when we needed them, you called your legislators and you came to tourism day. We could not have done it without you!

So now the real work begins! Under the process established in the new law, the first thing that needs to happen is for the governor to appoint the members of the Washington Tourism Marketing Authority (WTMA) by July 1. He will be making nine appointments to the WTMA board, primarily from lists provided to him by the Speaker of the House and the Lieutenant Governor. These appointments are supposed to be from the tourism industry and must include at least one each from the following sectors: lodging, restaurants, rental cars, outdoor recreation, retail and attractions.

If you are interested in being on the WTMA board, you must submit an application to either the speaker of the house, the lieutenant governor or both. These offices have until May 1 to put together their lists. The offices have indicated that they would like to have information from interested parties by April 20. WTA will be providing more specific contact information in the next week. If you are interested in being on the WTMA board, you cannot be on the board of an organization that might be the contractor for implementing the statewide marketing program.

Once the WTMA board is appointed, they will need to meet and organize for moving forward. Among other things, the board will be tasked with contracting with an entity that will implement a statewide tourism marketing program and determining what constitutes a match. Remember that state general funds have to be matched on a 2:1 basis.

Once the contractor is selected the WTMA will be responsible for making certain that the new marketing efforts reflect the priorities in the law. And, of course, there will be the job

of making certain there are matching funds and in-kind contributions to make the program a success.

You have all been helpful with our efforts to date. We look forward to working with you as the program becomes an actuality!

WTA THANKS BOARD MEMBER KRIS WATKINS

Diana Thibado, Director of Operations

The WTA would like to sincerely thank Kris Watkins for her dedicated service to both the Washington Tourism Alliance and Washington State tourism. Kris will retire on April 6th after leading Visit Tri-Cities as President and CEO for more than two decades.



Kris joined the WTA board in 2015 and served as a passionate advocate for statewide tourism funding during that time. We sincerely appreciate everything she's done to support tourism throughout her career and especially her strong advocacy during the critical legislative process over the past 3 years. Kris wanted to share the following words with her industry colleagues:

My career in the tourism industry has been an adventure, an education and an exciting experience all rolled into one. And one of the greatest honors of my career was serving on the WTA Board.

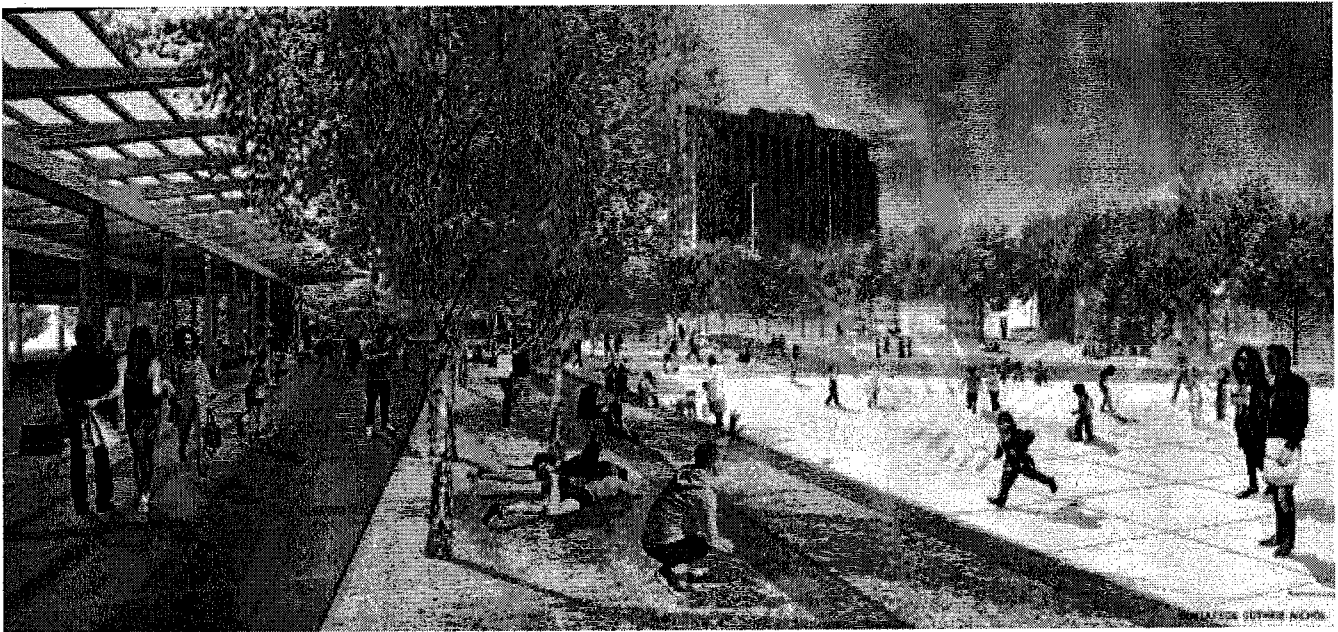
The timing of my retirement is somewhat bittersweet because we are on the cusp of creating tourism greatness. I am thrilled with the passage of tourism funding bill. It is vitally important to have an appropriately funded state tourism program, and the bill before the Governor is a great first step to creating a strong WTA. I am excited to see what will be accomplished as more tourism jobs are created and tourism continues to flourish in cities and counties throughout Washington State.

However, as I look back, one of the greatest treasures of my career is the relationship I have built with you, my tourism colleagues. I have made so many wonderful lifetime friends in the tourism industry, and for that, I am very grateful.

Thank you for 24 wonderful years in tourism.

We wish Kris nothing but the best in her retirement!

YAKIMA CENTRAL PLAZA MOVES FORWARD



The Yakima Central Plaza Steering Committee successfully completed a campaign that raised \$9.6 million from nearly 500 donors for the City of Yakima to build a new gathering space in Downtown Yakima. Slated to open in late 2019, the Yakima Central Plaza will be a three-acre open space. The park like square will have many features including a shaded grove with seating, running water channels, water jets for children and various structures.

John Cooper, CEO of Yakima Valley Tourism and a board member of the Washington Tourism Alliance, was on the committee of community leaders that raised the funds.

Yakima Valley Tourism's non-profit foundation was also a conduit for many of the donations. "The plaza will be a major catalyst for the positive development of downtown Yakima" stated Cooper. "Not only will it be a gathering place for the residents, it will be a draw for groups and visitors." The plaza is designed by renowned landscape architect Kathryn Gustafson, a Yakima native who designed the Princess Diana Memorial in London and the grounds for the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C.

For more information on the project visit www.yakimacentralplaza.com.

MEMBERS IN THE NEWS

WASHINGTON STATE'S NEWEST DRIVE TOUR: THE SOUTH CASCADES LOOP

VISIT TRI-CITIES ANNOUNCES NEW CEO

SEATTLE SOUTHSIDE HOSTS TOURISM SYMPOSIUM MARCH 29TH

SUBMIT YOUR STORIES

Want to brag about something your destination was recently recognized for? Have news that impacts Washington State tourism? Please add the WTA to your distribution news list! We're always looking for story ideas for the WTA monthly newsletter! To submit a story idea, email Diana Thibado at diana@watourismalliance.com.

WTA THANKS DECEMBER, JANUARY, AND FEBRUARY MEMBERS

NEW MEMBERS

Global Yodel, Vance Creek Railriders, Visit Kent

RENEWING MEMBERS

Campbell's Resort, Cascade Loop, Chateau Ste Michelle, City of Edmonds, City of Gig Harbor, Discover Lewis County, Explore Port Orchard, Food Services of America, Grays Harbor County, Hilton Garden Inn – Yakima, Hilton Vancouver Washington, Holiday Inn Express – Puyallup, Jefferson County Tourism, Munchen Haus Bavarian Grill and Beer Garden, Olympic Peninsula Gateway Visitor Center, Prosser Chamber of Commerce,

Puget Sound Express, R. C. Hedreen Co, REI Seattle, River Park Square, San Juan Cruises, San Juan Island Outfitters, San Juan Safaris, Seattle Art Museum, Seattle Southside, Smith Tower, Space Needle, Spokane Public Facilities District, Swinomish Casino & Lodge, The Embassy Suites – Sea-Tac, Three Rivers Convention Center, Travel Tacoma + Pierce County, Visit Spokane, Washington Bed and Breakfast Guild

If you have not yet joined the WTA and would like to become a member, please contact our Managing Director Mike Moe or join today online here.

► **NEWS, WTA NEWS**

