

A photograph of two young girls in winter clothing standing in a snowy field. The girl in the foreground is wearing a teal jacket and a colorful knit hat, smiling. The girl in the background is wearing a pink jacket and is also smiling. The background shows snow-covered ground and bare trees under a bright sky.

North Dakota Tourism Industry Newsletter

February 16, 2021

Legislative Update



Funds requested to extend Tourism marketing campaigns

North Dakota is poised to rebound as the world emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic and people start traveling again. That was the message presented last week by North Dakota Tourism and Marketing Director Sara Otte Coleman to a Senate Appropriations subcommittee hearing considering Senate Bill 2018, the Department of Commerce funding bill.

Otte Coleman testified on behalf of Tourism's request for a \$461,000 increase to the proposed budget for operations, \$2 million for destination marketing and \$200,000 for visitor support and brand activation to strengthen the position to lengthen stays.

"North Dakota is in a unique position – we can recover quickly and support our 3,000 small businesses that desperately need the customers we inspire. To do this, we need to increase our

marketing budget so we can showcase the state's offerings with a longer running campaign." - Otte Coleman

Otte Coleman said the money would be used to extend campaigns, garner media coverage and improve technology to support those efforts. New research tracking arrivals to North Dakota reveals that those who have seen our advertising are 58% more likely to visit. To further the path to purchase, the advertising directs visitors to NDTourism.com. Website visitors were 84% more likely to come to North Dakota and 44% more likely to stay an extra day.

"Pent-up demand, including Canadians who have not been allowed to cross the border, is strong. Our uncrowded communities and wide-open spaces are a competitive advantage post-pandemic. We have the experiences, amenities and infrastructure that visitors seek, they just don't know what we have to offer." - Otte Coleman

In addition, the Tourism Alliance Partnership is requesting \$18 million for the biennium to improve North Dakota's ability to compete with neighboring states. The subcommittee considering the bill includes chairman Sen. Brad Bekkedahl, Sen. Ray Holmberg and Sen. Joan Heckaman.

Other bills being considered contain different ways to use Legacy Fund earnings to support infrastructure improvements and economic development. Those bills are HB 1037, HB 1380 and HB 1425.

[Click here for more tourism-related bills](#)



Sen. Kevin Cramer co-sponsors Hospitality and Commerce Job Recovery Act of 2020

Sen. Kevin Cramer (R-North Dakota) and Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto (D-New Mexico) have introduced legislation to address ongoing COVID-19 impacts on the travel and tourism industry through the Hospitality and Commerce Jobs Recovery Act of 2020.

[S.4807](#) establishes new tax credits and revises existing credits and deductions to protect the hospitality and restaurant industries. Specifically, the bill allows a convention and trade show restart tax credit for (1) the costs of participation in a convention, seminar or similar meeting, a business meeting or a trade show that takes place after 2020; and (2) the costs of reopening an entertainment facility closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It also allows a business-related tax credit for the costs of reopening restaurants or food

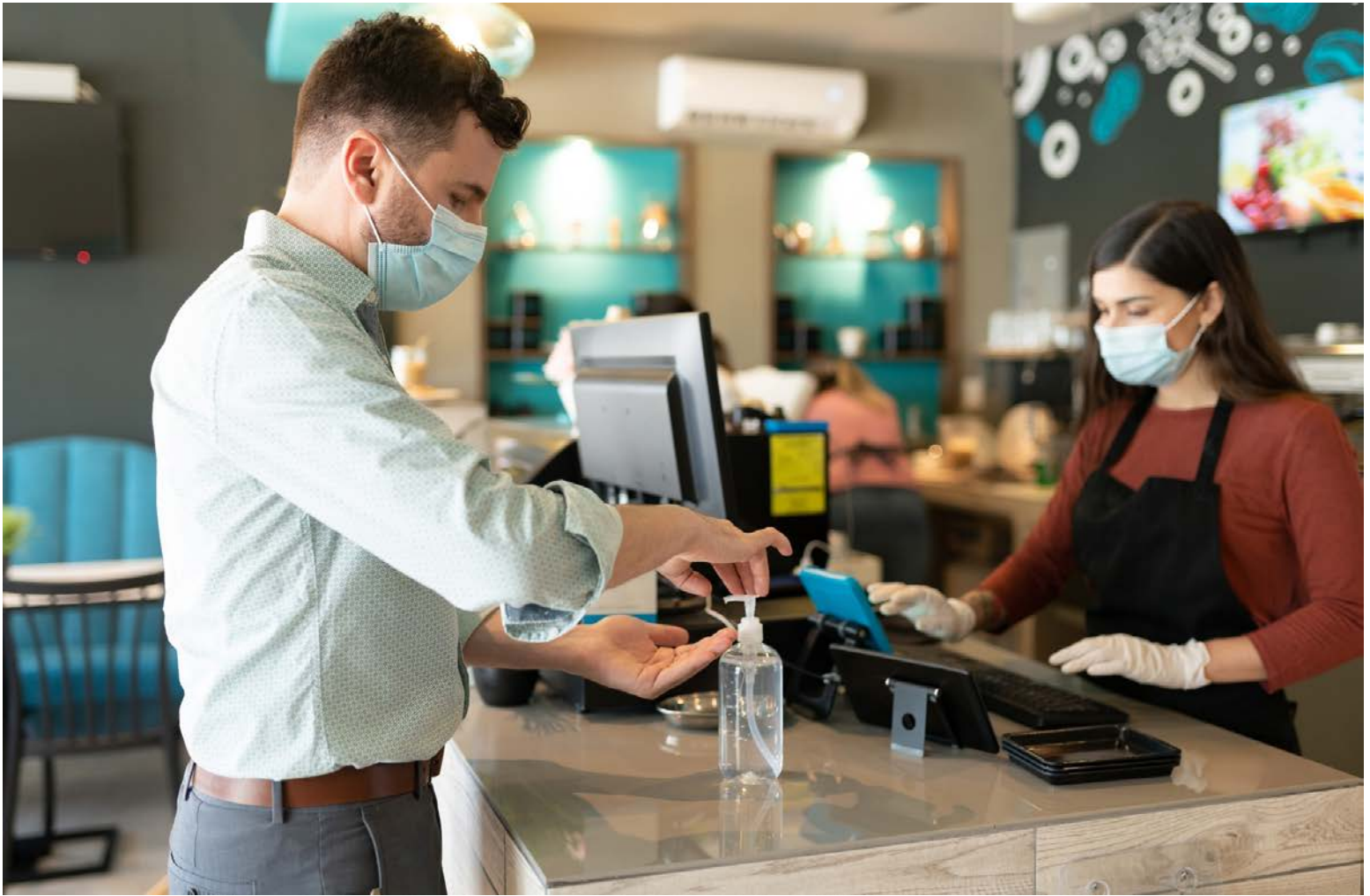
service businesses forced to close down or reduce operations due to COVID-19.

The bill modifies and increases the rate of the tax credit for the retention of employees for an employer whose business has been affected by a disaster or public health emergency. It also repeals the increased limitations on the tax deduction for meals and entertainment expenses enacted in 2017.

Finally, the bill allows individual taxpayers a new tax credit up to \$1,500 for a household for travel expenses relating to entertainment activities occurring in the United States between Jan. 1, 2021, and Dec. 31, 2023.

“While the economy is on its way to recovery, several businesses and workers are still hurting and in need of assistance. Our bill injects help into some of the hardest hit industries and encourages them to hire and retain employees.” - Sen. Kevin Cramer

S.4807 has been heard twice and referred to the committee on Finance.



Still time to apply for Round 2 of Commerce HERG grants

Help is available to North Dakota businesses hurt by the effects of COVID-19. The second round of Hospitality Economic Resiliency Grant applications are being accepted through Feb. 25. These grants are for restaurants, recreation venues and entertainment venues like bowling alleys, trampoline parks, indoor golf facilities and more.

So far, 218 applications for \$7.5 million have been submitted. Leaving more than \$22 million in the coffers, so spread the word throughout your communities.

[Click here for details](#)



Analytics/Trends

Data suggests North Dakota is a preferred family destination

The effect of COVID-19 on travel and tourism has been staggering, but things have begun turning around, albeit slowly, and should continue to do so.

North Dakota remains a preferred destination for families looking for a safe and affordable road trip option. The state is primarily a drive-to market with

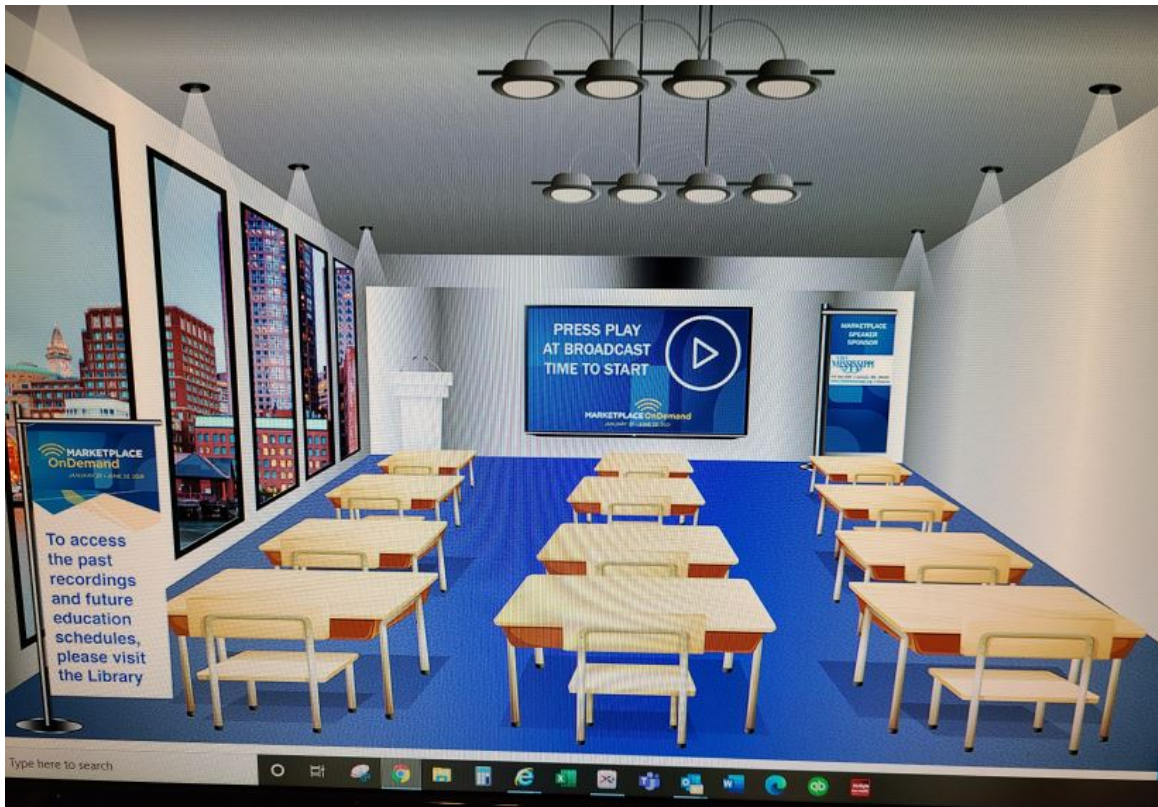
80-90% of visitation arriving by automobile. And travel site [KAYAK](#) predicts travel will return to as much as 80% of normal in 2022.

Word about North Dakota is spreading. [NDtourism.com](#) saw visitation up 36% year-over-year in January after rising 51% in 2020. Tourism's first winter campaign has produced 1.1 million video completions, 70,128 Facebook people reached and more than 1,000 YouTube-to-website conversions.



Tourism Ops

Group Travel Marketing



Group Travel Marketing Director Deanne Cunningham completed the Heartland Travel Showcase with a request from a tour operator to create two new tours in 2022, one for four days and three nights in the west; the other for six days and five nights in the central part of the state. Both are new tours which could have an economic impact of more than \$56,000 during the visits.



In the News



North Dakota is ranked second-safest state during COVID-19 pandemic.



For golfers, including those at Riverwood in Bismarck, a mostly mild winter brings unexpected perks.



[North Dakota tourism expected to recover.](#)



[North Dakota tourism primed for a big return, but is there enough money for marketing?](#)



[National Buffalo Museum plans pasture tours for summer.](#)



[North Dakota Tourism had an opportunity to “talk” North Dakota on the Exploring the Midwest podcast.](#)



[Despite pandemic, 2020 a very busy year at Theodore Roosevelt National Park.](#)