



For Immediate Release

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Statement: Illinois Destinations Association Urges Renewed Investment in Tourism and Economic Development After Budget Address

****Media interviews available upon request****

The following is a statement from Brittany Henry, Board Chair of the Illinois Destinations Association (IDA) and Executive Director of the Jacksonville Area Convention & Visitors Bureau: "The State's Convention & Visitor Bureaus (CVBs) are on the front lines of competing for trade shows, conventions, group business, and sporting events, bringing huge economic benefits to our communities, not only in terms of increased tax revenues, but also in supporting our local businesses, growing jobs, and improving Illinoisans' quality of life.

Illinois' Tourism Industry has been driving growth in the state, bringing in a record 113 million visitors who spent a record \$48.5 billion in 2025. But these numbers reflect the work that happened 3-5 years ago – work performed by CVBs to compete for and lure business and recreational travelers into Illinois, rather than other states.

Now we're facing diminishing investment by the State of Illinois. Under the Governor's proposed budget for FY 27, DCEO grant funding for the state's CVBs will decrease by nearly \$5 million, or 18%.

As the State faces federal funding challenges and uncertainty, we call upon the Governor and our legislators to look to Tourism Promotion to drive economic growth. Through investments in

tourism, together we can support Illinois businesses and increases the state and local government tax revenue – promoting greater affordability for Illinois residents by offsetting revenue needs that would otherwise fall on them. In 2024, 112.9 million visitors made \$48.5 billion in tourism expenditures, generating a total economic impact of \$85.1 billion for Illinois businesses and generating \$6.8 billion in state and local tax revenue. Every \$1 spent on Illinois' marketing campaign yielded \$74 in visitors spending and \$7 in state and local tax revenue.

Destination organizations like the CVBs are working every day to bring visitors to Illinois. From sports tourism to trade shows to leisure travel, visitors have no shortage of choices when it comes to where they spend their dollars. While budget makers will be facing tough choices this spring, today the IDA reminds these policy makers how critical tourism is to Illinois' economic development and vitality. Simply put, tourism investment grows the state's economy, and we urge the General Assembly to continue these investments.

We look forward to our continued partnership with Governor Pritzker and his administration, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, the Illinois Office of Tourism, and the Illinois General Assembly to support a thriving Illinois.”

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