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Good News for Wisconsin's Tourism Industry

Tourism is Wisconsin's third largest industry and was one of the first hit hard by the pandemic. However, good news was recently announced by U.S. Travel Association that indicates a slow but promising recovery for this industry and the over 20,000 jobs it supports.

Each month, the U.S. Travel Association releases a monthly travel data report, which tracks travel spending across all 50 states. Wisconsin was the first state in the Midwest, and only one of 13 in the nation, to exceed travel spending in September 2021 as compared to September of 2019. 2019 was a record travel spending year and is often used as a comparison to show economic recovery.

Our Midwest neighbors, Illinois and Minnesota, are still under the national average of -9%, at -21% and -20%, in spending declines. This highlights the enthusiasm of Wisconsinites to get out and travel. Our +1% spending increase couldn't have been accomplished without our residents exploring their own state.

Wisconsin has a lot to offer with 15,000 lakes, 43,000 miles of river shoreline and millions of acres of public land. I was proud to lead my colleagues on the Joint Committee on Finance in investing an additional \$1.5 million over the biennium for marketing expansion and continuing to fund the Office of Outdoor Recreation.

It has been shown that every \$1 invested in tourism promotion returns \$8 in tax revenue to our state. Although our spending increase is great news, it does not mean we are in the clear yet. I look forward to continuing this momentum and expanding our tourism markets, and I encourage everyone to go out and explore our great state.

To reach Sen. Ballweg with questions or comments please call (608) 266-0751 or email Sen.Ballweg@legis.wi.gov. Visit her website, legis.wisconsin.gov/senate/14/ballweg, to subscribe to her weekly e-update.

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