

Itasca Outdoor Advertising

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Attention: Chair, Scott Dibble and Members of the Senate Transportation Committee

Subject: Please accept this letter as my testimony to **OPPOSE** the SF485Marty (Billboard Moratorium Bill)

I am the owner and president of Itasca Outdoor Advertising, a small billboard company in Northern Minnesota operating for 25 years.

The proposed bill (SF485) states that the Minnesota economy benefits from TOURISM (*which a majority of people will agree is true*) but the proposed bill fails to consider all of the other aspects that make up the Minnesota economy such as local main street businesses, services, commercial activities, non-profit and all the other components of the economy. If the bill (SF485) intends to premise its argument on the economy, then PLEASE include the entire economy.

To further my opposition, one only needs to drill down and analyze the economy derived from TOURISM. The bill (SF485) goes on to make the claim that "billboards significantly undermine the beauty and make the state less attractive to TOURISM". If this were true, then the question; why do nearly all of the sectors of business that fall into the category of "TOURISM" utilize billboards as a major part of their marketing outreach to instill positive visual imagery about all the opportunities of tourism in Minnesota and as a means to direct the motorist to these various tourist activities. It is argued that billboards do more to encourage and promote tourism and the economic benefits of tourism in Minnesota than they do to detract from it. There is a misconception that billboards are mostly used by national companies but in reality, the vast majority of billboards are advertising for local Minnesota businesses whose commercial activities provide jobs and the tax base that contributes to support Minnesota.

It is inescapable that the Minnesota landscape looks different than it did a hundred years ago, as it is now made up of a conglomeration of City, high-density, low-density, Suburbs, and rural areas to support and sustain its people. There are residential spaces, hospitals, schools, churches, retail establishments, commercial and industrial activities, skyscrapers & city skylines, government buildings, power and transmission lines, bridges, highways & roads, airports, farming and agriculture and so much more. I challenge everyone on either side of the billboard issue to ask themselves which one of these activities it could consider "blight" because we know from history that this is a slippery slope when one group claims that a particular use should not be allowed because that group does not value how it looks or fits in. There is another misconception that people hate billboards, but in actuality the public opinion in general supports billboards as providing useful information and although some do support regulating billboards there is only an ultra-small population wanting billboards eliminated.

Minnesota has thousands of miles of protected stretches of highway and corridors that already prohibit billboards and billboard placement. Minnesota is already highly regulated at all levels of government from the local townships to county and state which makes it incredibly difficult to obtain permits to construct new billboards. It is my argument that the current, extremely restrictive regulation in Minnesota provides the check and balance needed and serves us adequately with no need for the proposed SF485 moratorium.

Lastly, I see firsthand how billboards are a benefit to Minnesota small businesses and the overall economy at the local level and additionally these same billboards are also used for public service communication and announcements which most billboard companies do participate in.

Thank you for the opportunity to respectfully submit this testimony

Daniel Larson – President
Itasca Outdoor Advertising

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel Larson".