



Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #712

Eliminate the Film Promotion Office (Tourism)

[LFB 2005-07 Budget Summary: Page 463, #4]

CURRENT LAW

In 2004-05, the Department of Tourism is provided \$3,562,200 GPR and 48.45 GPR positions for its tourism promotion general program operations. Among the 48.45 positions are 2.0 positions primarily responsible for staffing a film promotion office that promotes Wisconsin as a film and video industry destination.

GOVERNOR

Delete \$125,800 annually with 2.0 positions to correspond with the closing of the Tourism film promotion office.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. Beginning in 1995-96, the Department of Tourism allocated 1.0 GPR position to promote Wisconsin as a location for film and television production activities. In 2000-01, 3.0 staff were allocated to the film promotion office to increase awareness of Wisconsin filming and production opportunities through trade shows, publications, newsletters and film company surveys. In 2001-02, Tourism merged the film office into the Bureau of Marketing.

2. In the 2003-05 budget, 6.5 positions were deleted from Tourism and film promotion activities were reduced to two staff by the Department. Given the level of staff reductions sought by the Governor in 2005-07 (at least 7.65 positions under the bill), Tourism officials decided film promotion activities could no longer be supported and suggested this reduction as part of its 10% reduction plan.

3. The Department attempts to promote Wisconsin's film and video industry by marketing Wisconsin's natural and cultural resources and diverse four seasons. In addition, Tourism serves as an information clearinghouse for the state's film industry by maintaining a database of local Wisconsin crew, equipment and logistical services. The Department utilizes an internet web site, film promotion hot line, production guide, publicity, and individual consultation by film office staff to advance these goals. Further, Tourism sends out a monthly electronic newsletter to about 1,000 subscribers that links back to the Department's film promotion web site. In addition to work related to films, Tourism staff also assist with advertising and other commercial shoots.

4. Under the bill, Tourism officials indicate the Department would cease publishing the production guide and would terminate the film promotion hot line. The Department is currently evaluating options for maintaining the film promotion web site. Tourism states that remaining staff would be unable to assume film promotion activities without neglecting other Department activities.

5. Tourism's philosophy regarding the film office is to promote Wisconsin as a film-friendly state, with a talented pool of professional film and video crew and service producers. They attempt to market the state as a location for producers who desire a "Midwestern" feel for their production where there is a "friendly, wholesome and value-driven" atmosphere.

6. Tourism is unable to provide precise figures on the number of films and productions with which it assists, citing the lack of a necessary permit (or other required document) that can be used to track the number of productions in the state. However, Tourism officials state that the Department receives about 150 requests per year to see the Department's photo library of Wisconsin sites and scenery. Moreover, it is unknown how many productions utilized resources produced by the Department, such as the film promotion web site (which had approximately 150,000 visitors in 2004) or other Tourism publications, without directly contacting the Department. While Tourism does not track the actual number of productions that were aided, the Department receives approximately 10 to 25 requests for information weekly related to its film promotion efforts and literature. Many requests are simply for general information and are inquiries related to whether the Tourism has any funding available for productions, but others are more substantive. Several lower budget (typical budgets of \$50,000 to \$300,000) feature length film shoots are typically filmed in the state each year, often with some level of assistance from the Department. In addition, the film office aided two large productions that filmed in the state over the past two years. "The Amityville Horror" filmed in Kenosha County for six weeks in 2004, with in-state expenditures associated with the production estimated at about \$1 million. "Mr. 3000" filmed at Miller Park Stadium in Milwaukee in 2003, with estimated production company expenditures of \$7 million in the state.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Adopt the Governor's recommendation to eliminate \$125,800 GPR annually and 2.0 GPR positions associated with Tourism's film promotion office.
2. Maintain current law.

<u>Alternative 2</u>	<u>GPR</u>
2005-07 FUNDING (Change to Bill)	\$251,600
2006-07 POSITIONS (Change to Bill)	2.00

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