

CITIZENS FOR A SCENIC WISCONSIN
7525 Oakhill Ave. Wauwatosa WI 53213
August 3, 2001

Governor Scott McCallum
PO Box 7863
Madison WI 53707

Subject: Tree-Cutting to Expose Billboards

Dear Gov. McCallum,

We urge you to veto the Section (2340vg.) of the Transportation Budget that allows advertisers on billboards to trim trees and bushes along highways to increase exposure to their advertisements.

The Section allows trimming of vegetation to provide exposure of the billboard to drivers passing at the speed limit for 6 seconds. Under current regulations, the DOT trims vegetation to allow only a 4-second view. This is a 50% increase in the exposure of unwelcome commercial messages to drivers.

A healthy tourism industry depends on an attractive view of our state. Billboards are already degrading that view and 50% more exposure will make it worse.

The DOT, as the steward of the highway right-of-way, should do the trimming work as in the past. One of the stated purposes of statute 8430 is to enhance scenic beauty. There is also erosion control value to vegetation. We should not allow special interest groups to trim vegetation on public land because their only motivation is to clear-cut to expose their sign.

It will be difficult to supervise such groups, and asking them to substitute some vegetation near by is not practical. The vegetation can't be very large or it won't survive, and who is going to nurture it until it is self-sufficient?

About 70% of signs advertise products and services of no immediate need to tourists: automobiles, insurance, alcoholic beverages, cell phones, sneakers, etc. This is one of the reasons that four states (Maine, Vermont, Alaska & Hawaii) have state laws which have resulted in removal of all billboards. These states all depend heavily on tourism.

The right thing to do is veto tree-cutting. The people of Wisconsin want more trees, not more signs.

Sincerely,

Charles Mitchell, president

Copy: Sen. Peggy Rosenzweig