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TESTIMONY OF SCENIC MICHIGAN
House Transportation Committee, November 29, 2006

I am Peter Steketee, a Scenic Michigan Board Member and it is a pleasure to testify today in support of SB 567 and SB 568. Scenic Michigan's mission is to preserve, protect and enhance the scenic and aesthetic character of Michigan's communities and roadsides.

This legislative package is a significant step in the right direction toward preserving Michigan's scenic beauty. Under these bills, no new billboard permits will be issued and the number of outstanding unbuilt permits will be greatly reduced. Currently, there are over 14,000 billboards in Michigan and an additional 300 permits are granted every year. This legislation will put a stop to billboard proliferation and help to promote attractive communities for both residents and visitors in our great state.

Pursuant to SB 568, we are hopeful that the Michigan Department of Transportation will manage the trimming of trees in front of existing billboards in a reasonable manner. There are important safeguards in place to encourage this practice such as safety considerations and the need to protect the environment and unique natural features that surround our roads and highways. There are also significant penalties in place for improper trimming.

Finally, I want to commend Senator Tom George and key stakeholders such as MDOT and the outdoor advertising industry for taking the time over the past 6 months to meet and carefully review this critical issue. Because of this, Michigan can set an example for the rest of the country and encourage other states to follow Michigan's lead in their quest to preserve scenic beauty.

Thank you and I encourage your support of Senate Bills 567 and 568.