

Bill Regulating Short-Term Rentals Fails

A bill that would have imposed stricter regulations on short-term rentals seemed to have good support in the legislature this session, but didn't pass out of the Senate Finance Committee where it will sit until next session to see if there is interest in bring it back up.

Senate Bill 113, proposed by Sens. Ginny Lyons and Michael Sirotkin, would have began to regulate short-term rentals like Airbnb and similar programs.

The bill would affect people who rent out rooms in their homes, or who rent their property seasonally, such as someone who owns a ski condo and rents it when they're not using it during the ski season.

The state rooms tax is due on any room rented on short-term basis for 14 days in a year.

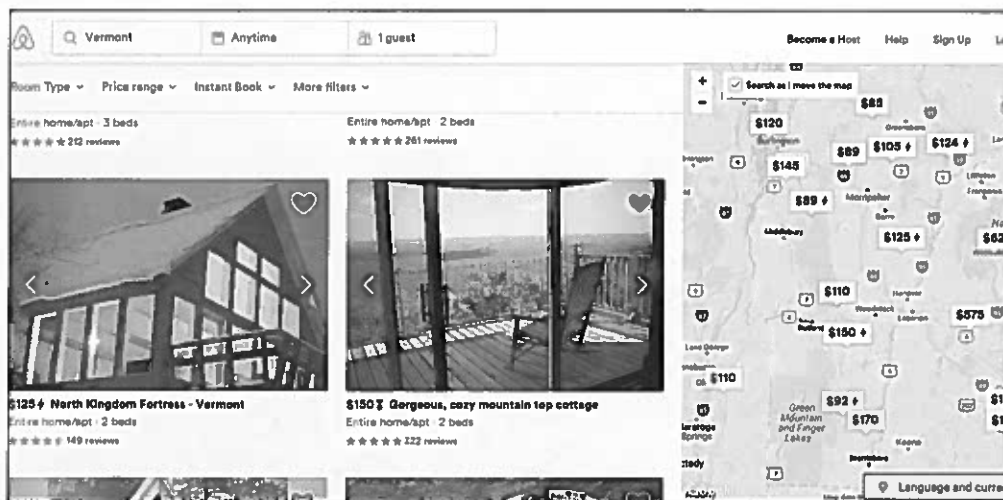
Vermont announced an agreement with Airbnb last year where the online rental service would collect the tax and remit it to the state.

But no other state regulations covering hotels, motels, bed and breakfast operations and similar lodging properties apply to the short-term rentals, including health, safety and sanitation regulations.

The Vermont Chamber of Commerce supported the bill and said it provided an unfair advantage over those who were required by the state to comply with all state regulations.

SB 113 would require short-term rentals to certify that they are in compliance with local zoning ordinances as well as all state laws and regulations. A certification would cost \$150 and be good for five years.

Commercial lodging properties have to renew their license to operate every year.



The problem isn't small.

In Vermont, Airbnb says it has 3,000 active hosts who have earned more than \$17 million in supplemental income in 2016.

Those 3,000 hosts saw 140,000 visitors, an 87 percent increase over the previous year.

According to Airbnb, the average host's property was occupied 23 nights per year and earned \$5,600, and those funds are sometimes critical to property owners being able to maintain their properties, pay property taxes, and stay in their homes.

The average length of stay was 2.6 nights per rental.

Leading the way in Vermont was Burlington with 24,110 guest arrivals accounting for more than \$3.1 million.

Not far behind was Rutland, where 16,110 guest arrivals pumped more than \$2.4 million into the economy. Stowe was third with 10,818 guest arrivals accounting for more than \$2.1 million. Montpelier and Brattleboro rounded out the top-five list.

"We are proud to see that more and more Vermonters have discovered home sharing as an opportunity to share their community with visitors

from around the world, and earn a little bit of extra money along the way," said Josh Meltzer, Head of Northeast Public Policy, Airbnb.

"From Burlington to Brattleboro, Airbnb hosts are ambassadors to the Green Mountain State and we are grateful they have embraced home sharing as a way to welcome thousands of visitors."

Because Vermont is a vacation destination, Airbnb expects the ski chalets in Stowe and downtown lofts in Burlington to continue to be hot rentals for visitors who are looking for something different from the usual hotel.

And if a homeowner who spends the winter in Florida, or a ski condo owner, can make some money renting their property to someone who wants to come to Vermont to ski, Airbnb can help them do that.

Airbnb allows owners to list their property for rent in the community marketplace.

It then allows someone looking for a rental to discover the property and book it online including from a mobile phone or other device.

Airbnb offers listings in 34,000 cities in 192 countries.