

From: Brian Remer [mailto:brian@thefirefly.org]
Sent: Tuesday, April 24, 2018 10:04 PM

Subject: s. 204

Dear Mr. Wild:

I am disappointed that the Legislature is considering Bill s.204, a bill that is clearly against Vermont homeowners who are trying to supplement their income by renting a spare room through Airbnb or other home-sharing systems. So far, at least one Senator from my district, Ms. Balint, has made statements in favor of the position held by the Vermont Inns and Bed and Breakfast Association (VIBBA) at the Brattleboro Chamber meeting. I am disappointed that she and so many other legislators have been co-opted by the lopsided interests of these business people.

I am a Vermont homesteader trying to earn a livable wage. My wife and I both work but if we did not have our income from Airbnb we would not be able to pay our property taxes. To say that we have an unfair advantage over an Inn or Bed and Breakfast is ludicrous.

Owners of Inns live rent free. Their Inn business pays their mortgage. The Inn business pays for many of their meals -- especially if the Inn has a restaurant. The Inn covers the owners' insurance and their car. It can even cover the cost of entertainment such as eating out and staying at other Inns (This is counted as a "research expense" to learn about their competitors!). All of this should be considered income yet owners pay no taxes on these items.

In fact, these free benefits are promoted as one of the major reasons to enter the Bed and Breakfast business. Read this blog dated September 26, 2017 on the Inn Partners website (<https://www.innpartners.com/inns-million-part-ii/>) and you'll see a description of the Chester House Inn, of Chester, Vermont, which specifically describes these advantages as part of the income stream of the Inn owners. Inn Partners, based in Brattleboro, is a consulting firm to the Innkeeping business. Employees from this organization have lobbied for the legislation against Vermont homesteaders like me and my family.

The bill that the Senate just passed was drafted by these lobbyists and VIBBA without any input from over 3,900 Vermont homeowners who depend on Airbnb to help them pull together a living wage. The central argument of VIBBA is to "level the playing field" -- as if homesteaders are in competition with Innkeepers. The people who share our home at \$50 a night would never be able to stay at a Vermont B&B for \$200 - \$500 a night. As much as Innkeepers complain about Airbnb, they are happy to use the Airbnb platform to market their business -- and reap their tax-free benefits.

I am asking that you urge your colleagues in the House to defeat this horrible legislation before it reaches the Governor and so that average Vermonters can earn a simple living.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Brian

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