



S.210: Rental Health & Safety
House Committee on General, Housing, and Military Affairs
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The Vermont Chamber of Commerce represents 1,200 members statewide, including hundreds of lodging properties. Informed by routine engagement with our membership, Vermont's tourism and hospitality industry, and our partners at American Hotel and Lodging Association, we maintain a knowledgeable perspective on issues impacting the tourism and hospitality industry.

At their foundations, short-term rentals and licensed lodging properties both are businesses, and both provide overnight accommodations. A difference? The inns and hotels have existed for several hundred years; third-party online platforms that are drivers of the short-term rental industry did not launch until the mid-1990's. The Legislature has taken progressive actions (most recently Act 10 in 2018) to regulate the STR market in Vermont, and we see collecting information as the next step in the progression. It would also serve as an important step to ensure a safe rental environment.

While STRs contribute positively to Vermont's economy, they operate in a relatively unregulated environment. For example, licensed lodging properties are required to post licenses and evacuation route diagrams in an obvious location, and to have inspected portable fire extinguishers. Conversely, short-term rentals simply have a self-attestation that is retained onsite, no evacuation route requirements, and no fire extinguisher requirements. While there are good hosts in the short-term rental industry that go above and beyond baseline health and safety measures; creating or enhancing these measures should not be withheld because there are good players within an industry. Public health and safety measures are meant to ensure a safe rental environment for all and to protect the traveling public.

Additionally, collecting basic information would be a necessary first step to improve communications and would also provide data if the State chose to enforce health and safety regulations in the future. The hospitality industry has always welcomed competition on a level playing field, and the Vermont Chamber has supported the rights of property owners to occasionally rent their homes to earn extra income for up to two weeks without regulations. However, we are now seeing large numbers of STRs that are not occasional renters but unlicensed and unregulated property owners running small to medium sized lodging businesses.

This is a policy issue that is not unique to Vermont. For example, Rhode Island has created a new statewide mandatory registration program for STRs listed for rent with hosting platforms.

The foundation set by collecting basic STR information would be a positive step forward to ensure a safe rental environment and move towards equity in the lodging marketplace. We appreciate the continued dialogue and efforts to pursue safe overnight accommodations for the traveling public and look forward to remaining a resource.