

April 26, 2019

Senator Travis Hutson
Florida Senate
314 Senate Office Building
404 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Senator Hutson,

While SB 824 died in Committee, as the Neighborhood Council of St. Augustine we are writing with our concerns about legislation addressing Private Property Rights of Homeowners. Short term vacation rentals need to be controlled at a local level, which already has zoning codes and knows best the needs of its citizens.

The City of St. Augustine, as America's oldest city, has many unique historic neighborhoods. While our small town attracts millions of visitors a year to see our sights, one of our main attractions is that it is a vibrant, living city, where people reside. The role of the Neighborhood Council of St. Augustine is to represent these historic neighborhoods, many on the National Register of Historic Places, and to insure that the quality of life in these neighborhoods is protected. The Neighborhood Council of St. Augustine is made up of delegates from the 10 Neighborhood Associations representing these historic neighborhoods.

We have become very concerned over the sheer uncontrolled number of vacation rentals that have been popping up in our neighborhoods. There is a vast difference between a homeowner being able to rent out a room for some extra income and houses which have become "mini hotels". These are basically *commercial enterprises* in residentially zoned neighborhoods.

Other aspects of this same issue affect the affordable housing and entry-level housing in our community. As many houses are being purchased for the sole intent of short-term rentals, these homes are no longer part of the housing inventory in our community and have a direct impact on our current and future residents.

We find it ironic that this bill claims to protect property rights, when in reality it takes away the zoning rights of the homeowner, who invests in a residentially zoned neighborhood, knowing what can and cannot be built around him. Our stand is that *all* property owners who purchase in a residential neighborhood, especially RS-1 or RS-2 (single-family dwellings), have a reasonable right to live in a neighborhood with low intensity residential characteristics as the zoning stipulates, and as governed on a local level of city government.

In fact the State of Florida requires that each municipality has a Comprehensive Plan with a Future Land Map that secures that local zoning cannot be changed without amending the Comprehensive Plan. By giving a buyer commercial zoning rights in a residential area, this legislation tramples on the rights of the other homeowners, who live in a residential neighborhood. This legislation throws out Comprehensive Plan and zoning codes, which create stability and the management of growth in a community,

Although this bill was not taken up in the Senate and for the time is dead, we feel it is important to share the views of our community and its residents. We ask for your support to return the regulation of short term vacation rentals to the local level. Each community has different needs with zoning codes that reflect those needs. This is definitely a case of where Home Rule and local input is vitally important.

Thank you for your consideration of our viewpoint on this important matter. We would like to see future legislation that would return the regulation of short term vacation rentals to the local level and Home Rule. This would ensure that the unique characteristic of this historic city continue to reflect its history, charm and style in America's oldest city.

Sincerely,
Melinda Rakoncay

President of the Neighborhood Council of St. Augustine

Neighborhood Associations under the Council

- Flagler Model Land Neighborhood Association
- Greater Fullerwood Neighborhood Association
- Lighthouse Park Neighborhood Association
- Lincolnvillle Neighborhood Association
- Nelmar Terrace Neighborhood Association
- Old City South Neighborhood Association
- St.Augustine North Davis Shores (SANDS)
- St.Augustine Ravenswood Neighborhood Association (SARNA)
- St.Augustine Uptown Neighborhood Association (SAUNA)
- Spanish Quarter Neighborhood Association