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SUMMIT COUNTY

Blue River Breckenridge Dillon Frisco Montezuma Silverthorne Keystone Senator Dylan Roberts 200 E Colfax RM 346 Denver, CO 80203

RE: House Bill 25-1056 Wireless Permitting Pre-Exemption Bill

Dear Senator Roberts,

As the Senator for the Town of Breckenridge's District and one of the co-sponsors of House Bill 25-1056, the Town of Breckenridge respectfully submits this letter for your consideration.

The Town of Breckenridge relies on a tourism-based economy. This includes our world class amenities, natural beauty and authentic character which is home to one of the largest Nationally Registered Historic Districts in Colorado. The Town has long recognized that in order to provide such world class amenities to our community and visitors, cell phone and broadband connectivity are essential to our Town. We have put wireless communication design standards with reasonable review timelines in place to fulfill the need for connectivity while preserving our Historic District character and natural environment. We have strong concerns regarding language in the proposed HB 25-1056 which could prove detrimental to our community as well as others in Colorado as outlined below.

- The Bill creates a one size fits all regulation for all communities across Colorado without taking into consideration the potential need for an additional level of review as might be needed if the wireless communication facility (WCF) is within a Historic District or environmentally sensitive area.
- The shot clock should be consistent with those required by the FCC. Remedies and other restrictions should only apply in areas of the State that the Colorado Broadband Office has identified as underserved.
- The proposed shot clock starts one of two ways. One way is with "other documented communication" between the jurisdiction and provider. In the Town's experience, this first form of communication is a scoping conversation with no formal documentation to review but rather questions related to process and locations the provider is considering. At a pre-application meeting, the provider typically has a more developed program for locations, a preliminary plan and a design of the WCF. The pre-application meeting is an opportunity for the provider and jurisdiction to vet locations, gaps in coverage, and review design and process. The provider then takes that information to assemble a complete application. It is not unusual for the provider to take multiple weeks, even months, to submit an application after a pre-application meeting. Therefore, to require the shot clock to start after a documented communication or pre-application meeting is unreasonably vague, will cause confusion for all parties engaging in the process, and has the potential to force local

government staff to approve applications that are not complete and not in compliance with the code. The shot clock should start after a complete submittal is received.

• The use of local government entity structures for location or co-location of small cell facilities should include State structures as well (38-5.5-104.5). Including State structures would greatly improve the opportunity for cellular coverage across the State as many connectivity issues are along State highways. The ability for providers to locate on State structures could also prove beneficial to areas with Historic Districts by providing more height than existing historic structures.

In general, it is unclear what problems exist that this Bill intends to address. As outlined above, we do not believe that any gaps in coverage exist due to review timing or regulations in Town and this Bill should not be applied unilaterally across Colorado.

We are hopeful that as our Senator, you will understand how WCFs could have a long term impact on the community if not properly reviewed and support these amendments to the Bill.

Sincerely, Kelly Owens Mayor Town of Breckenridge



NEWS: POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

Bipartisan bill would let Colorado counties triple lodging taxes to pay for more than affordable housing

House Bill 1247 would allow voters to increase lodging taxes and use the revenue for infrastructure, law enforcement and conservation



Jason Blevins
4:00 AM MST on Feb 14, 2025



Homes fill the landscape in front of the ski area in Steamboat Springs in December 2021, a month after voters in more than a dozen mountain towns overwhelmingly approved additional taxes on vacation rentals. (Hugh Carey, The Colorado Sun)



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olorado lawmakers Thursday dropped bipartisan legislation that would allow local voters to raise their county lodging tax rate to 6% from the existing 2%.

The potential tripling of local lodging taxes — which mountain town voters <u>have recently</u> <u>embraced</u> as a way to <u>fund affordable housing</u> — would also come with an expansion in the types of projects that could be funded with lodging tax revenue.

<u>House Bill 1247</u> would allow increased lodging tax revenue to fund infrastructure, preserve historical sites, land and wildlife habitat, promote sustainable tourism practices, and employ more police and emergency workers.

Colorado Sen. Dylan Roberts, a Democrat from Frisco, in 2022 sponsored legislation that allowed communities to <u>redirect lodging taxes</u> from just marketing to allow spending on child care, recreational amenities and housing. Short-term rental advocates who have been girding for additional taxes are promising a fight as tourism funding moves beyond housing.

Voters in several mountain communities have approved that shift in tourist-tax spending. Roberts is also sponsoring House Bill 1247, calling it "a modest but important expansion" of not just the revenue but how communities could expand uses for lodging tax dollars.

"There's a proven track record of communities embracing the use of lodging taxes for crucial needs within their community," said Roberts, calling the redirection of lodging taxes "a game changer" in places like Eagle, Clear Creek, Grand, La Plata and Summit counties.



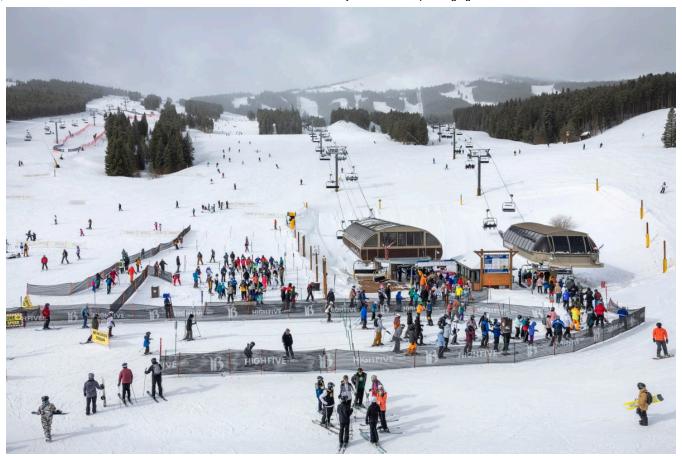
State Sen. Dylan Roberts, D-Frisco, speaks to a colleague at the Colorado Capitol in Denver on Wednesday, Feb. 12, 2025. (Jesse Paul, The Colorado Sun)

The new tax bill was expected by now well-organized groups of short-term rental property owners and advocates who **galvanized last year to reject a proposal** that would have quadrupled property taxes on short-term rentals. Short-term rental industry advocates have been predicting increased taxes and regulation on homes rented to vacationers as communities grapple with a lack of affordable housing.

The proposal to increase county lodging taxes up to 6% was <u>first floated last year</u> by Colorado Counties Inc. alongside a proposal to <u>tax homes that are left vacant</u> for most of the year. The lodging tax legislation would be for unincorporated portions of counties and could not add taxes to areas where there are existing municipal or district lodging taxes.

The proposal lands as tourism traffic ebbs in Colorado. Last year's overall visitation is expected to be flat compared with the previous year, marking a softening in the post-pandemic vacation boom. Fickle weather this winter has slowed skier traffic.

Breckenridge, home to the busiest ski area in the country, is down about 2% in lodging nights and 8% in revenue compared with the previous winter. And bookings remain slow for the rest of the year, said Lucy Kay, the head of the Breckenridge Tourism Office.



Skiers and riders flock Breckenridge ski resorts's Peak 8 base area for the chairlift rides up the mountain, March 13, 2024, in Breckenridge. (Hugh Carey, The Colorado Sun)

Combine the slowdown with an increasing movement toward <u>managing tourism more</u> than marketing to tourists and redirecting tourism taxes away from that traditional trumpeting of destinations and Colorado could be on the cusp of shifting away from an economic over reliance on visitors. But could a downturn in tourism revenues prod local voters to better recognize the value of tourism and maybe reject an additional tax for visitors?

"This is the question we are all asking," Kay said. "Those of us in the hospitality industry are looking at bookings for the next six, eight, 12 months and we are seeing this softening. For a lot of folks who are maybe voting on these issues, they may be less likely to see that until it is happening and revenues are compromised."

(Breckenridge conducts resident sentiment surveys every two years to take the pulse of locals, second-home owners and employers. Since 2017, those surveys show 80% of Breckenridge locals and homeowners supporting the town's management of tourism traffic, Kay said.)



Lobbyists gather outside of the Colorado Senate chambers on Monday, Feb. 10, 2025, in Denver, Colorado. (Jesse Paul, The Colorado Sun)

Short-term rental advocates were ready for the tax proposal. Julie Koster, the head of the Colorado Lodging and Resort Alliance and the Summit Alliance of Vacation Rental Managers, said owners are staunchly opposed to a vacancy tax.

"We have existing ordinances that restrict occupancy and limit the number of nights an owner can rent and how many reservations we can book. You can't restrict occupancy and then tax people because their home is empty," Koster said.

Opposition to a bump in lodging tax to 6% is more nuanced, Koster said. Vacation rental owners and advocacy groups support a 2% tax on nightly rentals to fund workforce and affordable housing. The new legislation would expand the uses of lodging tax revenue beyond housing and Koster said those community-focused investments should be handled with a community-wide tax.

"If we want to generate funding for all these different community needs, maybe we should use a broad sales tax that applies to all the spending in the region, not just visitors," she said. "Vacation rentals have been taxed and fee'd and regulated nearly to death. It feels like a

death by a thousand cuts and I feel like at some point we need to say enough and I think we are nearing that point."

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Short-term rental owners show up in force to oppose Colorado lawmakers' plan to tax their homes at a much higher rate 3:50 AM MDT on Nov 1, 2023

Plan to quadruple property taxes on short-term rentals in Colorado fails in late-night Capitol committee vote 10:53 AM MDT on Apr 17, 2024

Colorado short-term rental owners, advocates rally against "heavy-handed regulation" from lawmakers

4:04 AM MDT on Aug 30, 2024

The legislation would allow communities to craft their own plan with an increase in overnight taxes to as much as 6% in addition to choosing where that revenue could be spent. Koster said the short-term rental industry would support increased lodging taxes that fund housing, but not other projects.

Because of the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights, counties could not unilaterally impose a higher lodging tax rate if House Bill 1247 passes. They would need voter approval.

Roberts said the backers of the bill were careful to set the cap at 6%.

"It could have been higher but we wanted to make sure we were not going to have a detrimental effect on tourism," Roberts said. "In order to provide a good tourism and visitor experience that gets people to want to come back, you have to have the services — like housing, child care, law enforcement, landscape conservation — to support that visitor experience. I think by improving those services we can improve tourism and provide benefits for locals."

House Bill 1247 hasn't been scheduled for its first hearing yet. Its other lead sponsors are Democratic Reps. Katie Stewart of Durango and Karen McCormick of Longmont, as well as Republican Sen. Cleave Simpson of Alamosa.

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March 7, 2025

Brooke Rollins, Secretary of Agriculture U.S. Department of Agriculture 1400 Independence Ave., S.W. Washington, DC 20250

Delivered via electronic mail to: agsec@usda.gov

Re: Grand County, Colorado public lands staff terminations

Dear Secretary Rollins,

We, the Commissioners of Grand County, Colorado, on behalf of the citizens of Grand County, strongly support your leadership and the values you stand for, including the fight against fraud and waste in the Federal government.

However, we urge you to consider the critical role that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), National Forest Service (NFS), and National Park Service (NPS) employees play in our community. Grand County is not only one of the main entrances to Rocky Mountain National Park but also home to the Arapahoe and Roosevelt national forests. Our county also includes Lake Granby, located in the Arapahoe National Recreation Area — an area that draws tourists and supports local businesses. With nearly two-thirds of our county being public lands, the essential services provided by the dedicated staff of these agencies are central to our economy and way of life.

These employees oversee essential areas such as our lakes, which are key to our tourism economy. They also manage wildfire prevention efforts that protect our safety and the health of our land. Clean, well-maintained parks and forests are vital to Grand County, ensuring that visitors can enjoy peaceful, safe experiences in our natural spaces. The staff working in these agencies help maintain the pristine conditions of our parks, keeping trash cans empty and campsites quiet — critical components of our local tourism economy.

Given the vital role these employees play, we respectfully ask that you consider their importance as you review potential changes to the staffing and funding of the National Forest Service and National Park Service. We believe their work is crucial to the economic stability of our region and to preserving the natural beauty that defines Grand County.

The "boots on the ground" employees working day in and day out are not the sources of waste you are looking for, they are hard-working people who provide essential services to our County and the millions of visitors we receive each year.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We trust that, as you continue your work to streamline and improve government, you will recognize the irreplaceable value of the NFS and NPS employees in Grand County.

Sincerely,

Randal F. George Commissioner, Chair Edward Raegner Commissioner Merrit Linke Commissioner

Cc: Doug Borgum, U.S. Secretary of the Interior: doug.borgumlast@doi.gov

Elon Musk, Special Government Employee, Department of Government Efficiency:

doge@mail.house.gov

U.S. President Donald Trump: comments@whitehouse.gov