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Katherine Douglas

Public Comment - Visit Santa Barbara

From: Kathy Janega-Dykes <kathyjd@santabarbaraca.com>
Sent: Monday, June 3, 2024 3:48 PM
To: Steve Lavagnino; Das Williams; Laura Capps; Joan Hartmann; Bob Nelson
Cc: sbcob; Mona Miyasato; Nancy Anderson; Brittany Odermann
Subject: Letter Opposing 14% TOT Co-Signed by 109 Santa Barbara Regional Constituents
Attachments: Joint Letter to Supervisors 2024-06-03.pdf

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Hello,

Please accept the attached letter for tomorrow's meeting of the Board of Supervisors, respectfully submitted and co-signed by 109 regional business leaders, to oppose a 14% transient occupancy tax in the unincorporated areas of Santa Barbara County.

Best,

Kathy

Kathy Janega-Dykes | PRESIDENT/CEO
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The Honorable Steve Lavagnino
Chair, Board of Supervisors
County of Santa Barbara
105 E Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara CA 93101

June 3, 2024

Dear Chair Lavagnino, and members of the Board of Supervisors:

We, a diverse coalition of Santa Barbara County lodging, restaurants, attractions and transportation businesses, strongly oppose any transient occupancy tax (TOT) increase within the County of Santa Barbara. The loss of travelers to neighboring counties, as well as the loss of dollars for customers to spend at our restaurants and retail outlets, would add even more of a burden to an already challenging business environment. We urge the Board of Supervisors to table any discussion of new or increased, targeted taxes on hospitality businesses and on our guests. We further implore you to partner with us to maximize the economic impact generated by the leisure and hospitality industry and to improve, not threaten, our shared success.

Increased Taxes Create a Competitive Disadvantage

Santa Barbara County, and most incorporated cities within it, already have the highest transient occupancy taxes on the Central Coast at 12%. To win new customers and retain existing visitors, our businesses and attractions constantly compete with other desirable destinations in Ventura County (whose TOT is 8%), San Luis Obispo County (at 9%) and Monterey County (10.5%). **Any increase above 12% would be a true “unforced error” – a completely avoidable competitive disadvantage.**

The Hospitality Industry Pays More Than Enough

Visitors throughout Santa Barbara County are consistently taxed more than residents, while consuming significantly fewer public services. While sales tax ranges from 7.75% to 9.25%, almost no visitor spending categories are tax exempt, while residents rightly receive exemptions for many necessities such as groceries and medications. Similarly, the average overnight visitor pays the TOT, while our hotel, inn and short-term-rental businesses also pay property taxes similar to residents. Throughout the county, visitors consistently pay for general fund services that are disproportionately enjoyed by non-visitors. **Rhetoric that visitors should “pay their fair share” does not acknowledge that visitors already pay more than residents on a per day basis.**

Threats From Every Corner

Dark clouds are gathering once again. Our destination’s annual hotel vacancy rate (i.e., empty rooms) is above 30%. If any other sector of the economy had a 30%+ vacancy rate (such as store fronts, farms, residential real estate) we believe you would rightfully jump to action.

Discretionary consumer spending on categories such as travel has already peaked. After years of inflation, the Federal Reserve is intentionally slowing the economy through higher interest rates and all our businesses are in an uphill battle to maintain our customers. Indeed, even unemployment is on the rise in Santa Barbara County. **Regardless of the headlines, hospitality is a sector in recession.**

While it may be tempting to think of us as faceless organizations, remember the human impact of such a recession. Our industry's success has always come from teams of dedicated employees who work to provide upbeat service, welcome visitors and create lasting memories for our customers. Overnight visitation is directly correlated to these critical jobs. High lodging vacancy rates lead to unemployment, falling wages and salaries, less predictable schedules, fewer tips and less spending by employees' families across the community. **Taxes targeting our industry lower the value of overnight travel to our region and increase all of these threats.**

We are reliant on you as leaders to help during these challenges, not cause further harm. We urge you to cease any effort to increase targeted taxes such as the TOT.

Agreed to, and respectfully submitted by the 109 undersigned community members:

Aaron Carty, Operations Manager, **La Playa Inn**
Alan Howard, President, **Antique Alley**
Andrew Firestone, Principal, **StonePark Capital**
Angela Khan-Norton, Vice President, **Avania Inn**
Anne Pazier, Owner, **Santa Barbara Gift Baskets**
Antonio Morales, General Manager, **The Steward Santa Barbara**
Arvand Sabetian, General Manager, **Casa Jardin / Casa De La Vina**
Barry Fay, Professional EOS Implementer, **EOS Worldwide**
Bixente Pery, General Manager, **Four Seasons Resort The Biltmore Santa Barbara**
Bob Oswaks, Owner, **Bob's Well Bread Bakery and The Cottages at Bob's Well Bread**
Bradley Cance, General Manager, **The Ritz-Carlton Bacara, Santa Barbara**
Brandon Ristaino, Managing Member, **Good Lion Hospitality**
Brent Masters, Property Manager, **Professional Property Management**
Casey Carlisle, Guest Services Supervisor, **La Playa Inn**
Cherryl Connally, President/Co-owner, **Island Packer Cruises**
Chris Cline, General Manager, **Hotel Santa Barbara**
Conrad Perry, Director, **Lemon Tree Inn and Orange Tree Inn**
Dan Fitz, Front Desk Manager, **La Playa Inn**
David Sigman, General Manager, **Santa Barbara Polo & Racquet Club**
Diane Dreyer, Co-Founder, **Destination Vine**
Dr. Leonie Mattison, President and CEO, **Pacifica Graduate Institute**
Drew Wakefield, Director of Sales & Marketing, **Ramada by Wyndham Santa Barbara**
Edward Galsterer, General Manager, **Santa Barbara Inn**
Elise Gonzalez, Sales Manager, **Santa Barbara Inn**
Emma Rosenberg, Revenue Manager, **The Ballard Inn, A Kirkwood Collection Hotel**
Erik Hoegh, Events, **Anchor Rose**
Fabienne Massonneau, Back Office / Bookkeeping, **Inn On Summer Hill**
GeanCarlo Aliaga, General Manager, **Coast Village Inn**
Graham Goodfield, **Los Padres Outfitters**
Gregory Broussard, General Manager, **Brisas del Mar Inn at the Beach**
Haley Boots, General Manager, **Simpson House Inn**
Hannah Goodfield, Partner/Owner, **Los Padres Outfitters**
Harry Kazali, General Manager, **La Playa Inn**
Hiroko Benko, President, **Condor Express**
Ian Williams, General Manager, **San Ysidro Ranch**

Jacques Habra, Owner, **Noospheric**
Jaime Diamond, CEO, GM, **Santa Barbara Landing**
Janis Clapoff, General Manager, **El Encanto, A Belmond Hotel**
Jason Copus, Director of Sales & Marketing, **Montecito Inn**
Jason Diamond, Owner / Operator, **Stardust Sportfishing**
Jeanette Webber, Owner, **Santa Barbara Hotel Collection**
Jeffrey Harding, Owner, **Coast Village Management**
Jennifer Nunez, Director of Revenue, **The Leta Santa Barbara Goleta**
Jens Baake, President, **Acme Hospitality**
Jessica Carr, General Manager, **Carr Vineyards & Winery**
Jessica Windle-Cross, Director of Sales & Marketing, **Hotel Milo**
Joel Rintoul, Controller, **MANN+HUMMEL Water & Fluid Solutions**
John Simpson, Owners / Winemaker, **The Shopkeepers**
Jonathan Taylor, **Sea Ledge Lane**
Jorge Salgado, Owner/Operator, **The Barber Shop**
Josiah Jenkins, **Jedlicka's Saddlery**
Juliana Ramirez, President & CEO, **JR Bookkeeping**
Karl Hutterer, CEO, **Moby Dick Restaurant**
Kathryn Carlton, Director of Sales and Marketing, **El Encanto, A Belmond Hotel**
Kathy Brown, Owner, **Circle Bar B**
Kathy Janega-Dykes, President/CEO, **Visit Santa Barbara**
Kenan Jones, Vice President of Operations, **Blue Sands Inn**
Kevin Frank, Owner, **K. Frank**
Kirk Wiles, CEO, Founder, **Paradise Springs Winery**
Kristen Miller, President/CEO, **Santa Barbara South Coast Chamber of Commerce**
Laura Santo, Front Desk Manager, **Inn On Summer Hill**
LeRoy Russell, **Hideaway Santa Barbara**
Linda Small, Executive Director, **Santa Ynez Chamber of Commerce**
Lisa Amador, Owner, **Amador Matchmaking**
Logan Jones, Owner / Chef, **Tamar**
Lucas Martinez, President/CEO, **Hearth Hospitality**
Marisa Brooks, Regional Director of Revenue, **The Leta Santa Barbara Goleta**
Marissa Jones, Principal, **Carpe Digits Finance**
Mark Weakland, General Manager, **Best Western Plus Santa Barbara**
Mary Beth Larkin, CEO, **(IN)LARKIN**
Matt Cooper, Owner/Founder, **Coastal Concierge**
Matthias Pippig & Jamie Kinser, Owners / Winemaker, **The Sanguis Collection**
Michael Amador, Co-Owner, **The Nook and Nook Pizzeria**
Michael Cohen, President, **Santa Barbara Adventure Company**
Michael Martz, Partner Emeritus, **Hayes Commercial Group**
Misty Orma, Co-Owner, **The Good Lion, Test Pilot and Shaker Mill**
Monica Epstein, Co-Founder, **Drink Ysidro**
Nancy Burgner & Peter Gaum, Owners, **Lovebird Boutique**
Natalie Rowe, CEO/Owner, **Float Luxury Spa**
Nicole Weland, General Manager, **Best Western Plus South Coast Inn**
Oscar Mejia, General Manager, **Best Western Pepper Tree Inn**
Pamela Tanase, COO & Co-Founder, **Workzones**
Patricia Roulston, CFO/COO, **Team Solutions Group**

Patti Pagliei, Partner, **The Shopkeepers**
Paul Shults, Owner, **Inn On Summer Hill**
Paulette Bermant, Owner, **Inn On Summer Hill**
Randy Berg, Chief Human Resources Officer, **Transphorm**
Richard Cox, General Manager, **Kimpton Canary Santa Barbara**
Robert Rauchhaus, Senior Vice President, **Radius Commercial Real Estate & Investments**
Roger Barrantes, Regional Director of Sales & Marketing, **The Leta Santa Barbara Goleta**
Saji Gunawardane, Founder, **U.S. Business Counsel**
Samantha Ireland, President, **Vacation Rentals of Santa Barbara**
Samantha Onnen, CEO, **Santa Barbara Airbus**
Scott Perry, Owner / CEO, **Lemon Tree Inn and Orange Tree Inn**
Sherry Villanueva, Founder & Managing Partner, **Acme Hospitality**
Silvia Rubio, General Manager, **Palihouse Santa Barbara**
Stella Ahn, Assistant General Manager, **Hilton Garden Inn Santa Barbara/Goleta**
Steve & Lesa Marsh, Shoreline Beach Cafe, **Shoreline Beach Cafe**
Sue McLain, Senior Sales Manager, **The Ritz-Carlton Bacara, Santa Barbara**
Sylvia Rivera, Owner, **Santa Barbara Endocrinology**
Teresa Stiff, General Manager, **West Beach Inn**
Tessa Nash, **Los Padres Outfitters**
Theo Kracke, President, **Paradise Retreats Real Estate**
Theodora Stephan, Owner, **Global Gardens**
Tom Patton, General Manager/Partner, **Ramada by Wyndham Santa Barbara**
Treg Finney, General Manager, **Mar Monte Hotel**
Tyler Tomblin, Co-Owner, **Stagecoach Co. Wine Tours**
Victor Evarone, Managing Partner, **Cabrillo Inn at the Beach**
Wayne Cassriel, Private Wealth Manager, **TKG Financial**

Cc:

Mona Misyasato
Nancy Anderson
Brittany Odermann
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors