

Katherine Douglas Public Comment - Visit Santa Barbara

**From:** Jennifer Reyes <JenniferR@santabarbaraca.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 23, 2024 12:38 PM  
**To:** Steve Lavagnino; Das Williams; Laura Capps; Joan Hartmann; Bob Nelson  
**Cc:** Mona Miyasato; County Executive Office; Nancy Anderson; Brittany Odermann; sbcob; Chris Cline; Tom Patton; Kathy Janega-Dykes  
**Subject:** Letter to Supervisors 2024-05-22  
**Attachments:** Letter to Supervisors 2024-05-22.pdf  
**Importance:** High

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

Visit Santa Barbara opposes increasing the transient occupancy tax above the current rate of 12% in the unincorporated areas of Santa Barbara County. It is our understanding that this matter will be considered as soon as June 2024. The timing of this deliberation, during the beginning of the peak visitor season, would be especially inconvenient for lodging businesses to appropriately share their concerns with you.

Additionally, we are very concerned that the County may consider this rate increase without first commissioning an economic impact analysis that would study the likely harm this proposal would have on the visitor industry. Should you wish to consider such a lasting burden on the hospitality industry, we urge you to first study, and report, the direct and indirect impacts on lodging businesses, their local employees, their many vendors and other government taxes.

There is good reason to pause for such a comprehensive study. Currently, 12% is the highest transient occupancy tax by any neighboring county. Increases above this amount will create an unnecessary disadvantage vis a vis Monterey, San Luis Obispo and Ventura counties.

We are sympathetic to the pressures on the county budget. We sincerely appreciate the vital services that the government provides to our communities, businesses, residents and employees. However, the only sustainable path to our shared prosperity is one of growth in economic activity. Our hotels and short-term rentals have significant unsold capacity we must fill. Your partnership to grow visitor volume will allow for higher lodging rates and outlet utilization. Solving this problem is the only certain path to increased TOT and sales tax collections by the county.

Visit Santa Barbara and our diverse members are actively working hard to increase the economic impact of visitors to the region – including in the highly sought after unincorporated South Coast. Proposals to increase targeted taxes on the industry undermine our investments and reduce our long-term competitive position in the marketplace.

For these reasons, we strongly encourage you to table any consideration of a transient occupancy tax increase. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss our concerns directly.

Sincerely,

Kathy Janega-Dykes  
President/CEO  
Visit Santa Barbara

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Kathy Janega-Dykes | PRESIDENT/CEO

Visit Santa Barbara

500 E. Montecito Street, Santa Barbara, CA 93103

(805) 966-9222 x113

[SantaBarbaraCA.com](http://SantaBarbaraCA.com)

The Honorable Steve Lavagnino  
Chair, Board of Supervisors  
County of Santa Barbara  
105 E Anapamu Street  
Santa Barbara CA 93101

May 22, 2024

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Kathy Janega-Dykes  
President/CEO  
Visit Santa Barbara

Cc:

Mona Misyasato

Nancy Anderson

Brittany Odermann

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

Chris Cline, VSB Chair

Tom Patton, VSB Vice-Chair