

The New Threat: On March 7, 2019, Representative Angie Chen-Button filed House Bills 3773 & 3778 under the innocuous sounding name of “Regulation of Short-Term Rental Units.” On that same day, Senator Pat Fallon introduced the very same bill in the Senate (Senate Bill 1888). If truth in advertising laws applied to proposed legislation, this proposed law would both have been entitled, “A Bill to Wreck Your Neighborhoods.”

Representative Chen-Button and Senator Fallon expressly seek to strip cities of the power to deal with STRs at the local level. They would impose on cities an absolute straight-jacket, forcing them to allow their citizens to be overrun with these mini-hotels.

Even a quick look at this proposed legislation shows how hostile and destructive it would be to neighborhoods if adopted into law. One overreaching mandate in the proposed law is that it forbids all cities in Texas from placing any limits – any – on the number of STRs in any particular neighborhood, or for that matter, citywide, by persons claiming that the homes are their primary residence. So, even if all these supposedly owner-occupied “homes” were *actually* the primary residence of the STR operator, a neighborhood near popular attractions or business districts could quickly find itself morphing into an area with more out-of-town strangers staying there every night than full-time residents who truly make it their home. And make no mistake: This “primary residence” requirement will be impossible to effectively police.

But perhaps nothing in the proposed legislation demonstrates the intent to hand over to STR operators the literal keys to the cities more vividly than the handcuffs it would place on municipalities with respect to admitted “commercial operators” of these mini-hotels. Specifically, even for admitted absentee STR operators, the bills would compel cities to allow as a matter of right STRs for up to 12.5% of all units city-wide, that is, one in every eight homes across in the entire city. And because the “limit” is carefully engineered to be 12.5 % of all units in the “municipality,” residents of neighborhoods where the commercial operators think they can make the quickest and biggest bucks should expect the number of homes in their neighborhoods occupied each weekend by a parade of strangers to soon exceed those occupied by friends and neighbors they know and trust.

*What Should You Do? You should raise your voices NOW in concert with the multitude of concerned citizens across Texas and tell your State representative and State Senator in the most forceful terms that you do not want STRs in your neighborhood because they are a nightmare and do want them to oppose HB 3773, HB 3778 and SB 1888 and any similar bills. Call or email them right away. It is time to light up their lines! You can find their phone number and emails in the attachment following. Also, and importantly during the week of March 18, call or email all the member of the Texas House Committee on Urban Affairs, and Sen Fallon. You will find their phone numbers and emails in the attachment as well. And while you're at it, be sure to tell them that in the future you will vote only for neighborhood-friendly candidates.*

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