



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P. O. Box 7882 Madison, WI 53707-7882

Assembly Bill 121

**Testimony from Representative Keith Ripp and Senator Luther Olsen
Assembly Committee on Housing and Real Estate**

April 2nd, 2015

We would like to thank Chairman Jagler and committee members for allowing us to present testimony today in favor of Assembly Bill 121.

Senator Olsen and I have authored this legislation at the request of constituents in the campground industry who have encountered regulatory challenges because seasonally-occupied cabins are currently considered and regulated under the one-family and two-family dwelling code as residences that are occupied throughout the year.

Because of these regulations, campgrounds have struggled to invest here in Wisconsin. We have brought forward AB 121 because these camping units are not occupied throughout the year, and they should be treated differently than one-family and two-family dwellings.

Last year, we authored a bill that would have provided an exclusion from the statutory definition of a dwelling to reflect units that are only used seasonally. After working with stakeholders over the last year, we have taken a different approach with AB 121. This legislation directs the Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS) to promulgate rules for the dwelling code that would apply only to these camping units as long as the camping unit is located in a permitted campground.

These regulatory improvements will aid the campground industry by providing the appropriate level of oversight for certain camping-related functions. With clarity in the administrative rules regarding these camping units, Wisconsin will realize investments here that may not otherwise occur.

Thank you again for allowing us to testify on AB 121. We ask for your support and would be happy to answer any questions.



*formerly the
Wisconsin Innkeepers Association*

Serving the lodging
industry for more than
100 years

April 2, 2015

To: Members of the Assembly Committee on Housing and Real Estate
Representative John Jagler, Chairman
From: Trisha A. Pugal, CAE
President, CEO
RE: Request for Changes to AB 121 on "Camping Units"

On behalf of over 700 lodging properties ranging from small to large and located throughout the state, over 100 of which offer cabins or cottages for rent to the traveling public primarily on a seasonal basis, we ask the Committee to modify AB 121 to ensure the traveling public is adequately protected whether they stay in a cabin, cottage, or "camping unit" at a campground or at a small family resort.

AB 121 provides considerable leverage to DSPS to not only generate separate regulations for what is deemed a "camping unit", but also to create a definition of just what a 'camping unit" would be. We would suggest that a more clear definition of what this is should be outlined in legislation up front, so that all structures renting lodging to the public can clearly identify what would change.

It is our opinion that there is justification in differentiating between specific basic rustic cabin structures that are rented to the public for overnight stays that would be reasonable and yet would not jeopardize meeting the expectations of the public for safety.

Including a definition of "camping unit" that would clarify that it is a yurt or cabin without plumbing would be reasonable, however for safety reasons, it should require that any electrical work connected to this camping unit must meet the Uniform Building Code. Our belief is whether it is a cabin or a camping unit, electrical wiring of a structure renting out to the public should follow code to ensure that air conditioners, microwaves, and other appliances that many of these units have, can be safely connected.

We believe that a cabin/camping unit without plumbing, which requires the renter to use common sinks, toilets, and shower facilities located elsewhere on the premises, can safely warrant different regulations, as the expectations to achieve a safe environment are less.

We welcome overnight guests in all types of licensed overnight lodging structures, and feel it is imperative to the state's tourism industry to provide a safe experience and environment to make our state a great place to visit and return to many times in the future. Thank-you for your consideration.

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Assembly Bill 121 Comments

April 2, 2015 Public Hearing

I am testifying this morning because I own Spur of the Moment Ranch in Mountain Wisconsin. I have been in business since September of 2000. Since 2005, I have held a dual license for lodging as well as a campground license. I have what we refer to as rustic camping cabins which fall under the tourist rooming house section of the current statute. These cabins are less than 400 square feet; do not have bathrooms in them; but they are on a concrete slab; have electric base board heat for early spring and late fall rentals; electric; refrigerator; microwave; and coffee pot. They are built in accordance to existing regulations Chapter DHS 195 for Hotels, Motels, and Tourist Rooming Houses.

In 2005, in addition we built 4 full housekeeping log cabins, with in-floor heat; kitchens, fireplaces, bathrooms, 2 of which are under 400 square feet; 2 that are approximately 475 square feet. The cost of each of these cabins was between \$45,000 and \$65,000 respective to their size. They also fall under the Hotel, Motel, and Tourist Rooming House Statute DHS 195.

An important fact is that they are considered real estate and valued accordingly on the tax rolls; as well as on our loans for the ranch.

Please allow me to review with you the current definition of Lodging – Sleeping Accommodations offered for pay. The current definition of Campgrounds – any parcel or tract of land providing sites for overnight camping.

Your new definition of camping in Assembly Bill 121 states that it will include camping units that are in a fixed location in a campground for which a permit is issued under s.254.47 that contain a sleeping place, and that are used for overnight camping.

My concerns with this bill are the following:

1-Blurred lines between lodging and camping.

2-Campgrounds pay taxes based on land tracts for rent, yurts, wagons, park models, and camping units are personal property in their definition. My cabins

are valued as real estate. If this "camping cabin" becomes the standard (the gray area) in which my cabins will fall as well I stand to lose \$200,000 - \$250,000 in property value, as someone eventually looking to retire and get the value out of what I have created this is an obvious concern to me. It should be a concern to the towns in the north woods as maintaining property values for taxes is a huge issue.

3-You may not think that this issue touches many properties, but there are many mom and pop cabins in the north woods that will be effected by these rule changes if they are not completely thought out.

4-There are lodging properties as well as campgrounds that are already dual licensed, and doing fine.

5-Perhaps, a compromise would be to allow bare bones camping cabins without heat, electric, plumbing. If they choose to go the next step they become a tourist rooming house according to the statutes that exist. This would also maintain a separation between real estate and personal property.

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