

Why everyone is cracking down on Airbnb

by Heather Kelly @heatherkelly June 23, 2016: 2:53 AM ET

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A pending New York bill would make it illegal for many people to list their apartments on sites like Airbnb. It's already illegal for people to rent most apartments for fewer than 30 days in the state, but this law backs it up with bite. Hosts violating the ban would face fines up to \$7,500. Airbnb says more than 40,000 hosts could be subject to the fines.

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In Airbnb's hometown of San Francisco, a new rule set to take effect on July 27 will require all hosts to register with the city. Instead of fining hosts, the San Francisco law would fine the rental companies up to \$1,000 a day for each listing, putting the burden on the companies to make sure each listing is legal.

But the \$50 registration process is analog enough to turn off many hosts. It can't be completed online and requires submitting all the documents in person.

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Other cities like Seattle and New Orleans are still weighing legislative options. They include surcharges, annual caps on rentals, and safety regulations. Airbnb and industry groups are actively talking to most of the cities, hoping to shape any future laws.

Some U.S. locations are friendlier to the industry. San Jose, Rhode Island and Denver have all passed Airbnb-friendly laws. In Philadelphia, people can share homes for up to 180 days a year.

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To convince cities and activists that short-term rentals can serve a common good, Airbnb might have to work harder to weed out sketchy landlords like the ones in Los Angeles.

"I think short-term rentals pose a serious threat to affordable housing," said attorney Randy Renick, who represents the Los Angeles tenants. "And in Los Angeles, the platform most widely used by landlords to evade the law is Airbnb."

Updated to include new Chicago Airbnb regulations.

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