



## Pitching a Bigger Tent: Using AB 518 to Unify Rural Lodging Policy

**TO:** El Dorado County Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Our EGG, The El Dorado County Chamber of Commerce , The El Dorado County Farm Bureau & El Dorado County Farm Trails

**SUBJECT:** AB 518 & The Future of Rural Lodging: A Call for a Unified Policy Strategy

November, 25th, 2025

### Honorable Supervisors,

The recent passage of California Assembly Bill 518 (AB 518) presents an immediate and significant economic opportunity for El Dorado County, clearing the path for rural landowners to host low-impact camping and generate new Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) revenue for the West Slope. However, the current process for drafting lodging policy is dangerously fractured: our various regulatory committees are operating in isolated "silos," which creates conflicting ordinances that actively undermine the SEED Economic Strategic Plan by eliminating the inventory needed to capture that vital TOT revenue. The critical choice before the Board today is this: ***Do we continue this costly, siloed approach that has led to past failures, or do we seize the impetus of AB 518 to finally unify our regulations impacting Rural Lodging?*** We urge the Board to implement the solution: **Establish a Unified Rural Lodging Working Group that integrates all rural lodging policy discussions** and includes industry stakeholders to co-create a single, cohesive master rural lodging ordinance that unlocks our working lands' economic potential.

### The Opportunity: A New Revenue Stream for the West Slope

The State's passage of AB 518 is a game-changer for our agricultural and rural districts. It has cleared the path for private property owners to host low-impact camping (up to 9 sites) on rural lands by shifting permitting authority from the State to local jurisdictions.

This new regulatory landscape offers our farms, ranches, and rural landowners a viable, low-infrastructure way to generate revenue, drive agritourism, and—crucially—increase Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) revenue for the County. However, to capitalize on this, the County must draft a local ordinance, which presents a critical choice.

## The Current Landscape: Silos Threaten Effective Policy Creation

If we attempt to insert AB 518 camping regulations into this existing ***lodging policy tangle***, we risk further confusion. Currently, the regulations that govern visitor lodging are being drafted in conflicting silos, often within private ad-hoc committees without effective cross-communication or stakeholder input.

### Consider the current fractured landscape:

- **VHR Ordinance:** Currently under review by a private VHR Ad-Hoc committee.
- **Agricultural Lodging:** Being addressed separately by the Budget Ad-Hoc in conjunction with Agriculture Department staff.
- **ADU Ordinance:** Created by Planning staff with input from the Housing/Homeless Ad-hoc and the Affordable housing Task Force, where detached units are being classified as affordable housing stock, inadvertently stripping owners of the right to use them for short-term rentals.
- **Camping/Glamping/RV rules:** Currently managed through the Planning department as a discretionary Conditional Use Permit process, with **no Ordinance existing**.

This lack of cohesion has severe consequences. We are creating policies that conflict with one another, specifically undermining the **SEED Economic Strategic Plan** by systematically eliminating the inventory needed to generate TOT revenue.

## Avoiding Past Mistakes - Why Industry Regulations Can't Be Made Without Industry In

**The Room:** We urge the Board not to repeat the costly cycle seen with the recent Tobacco Ordinance and the previous VHR Ordinance. In those instances, policies were drafted in a vacuum without stakeholder input, resulting in significant industry backlash, unintended economic consequences, and the ultimate revocation or rewriting of the ordinances at the taxpayers' expense.

## The Economic Reality

- We cannot afford to get this wrong, as El Dorado County has experienced **stagnant job growth (0%)** over the last five years.
- Furthermore, data from the **Our EGG VHR Report #1** indicates that West Slope operators are not generating nuisance complaints; they are generating "unpermitted" regulatory violations due to confusing and restrictive codes.
- Residents are losing essential income because their rentals have been arbitrarily reclassified, or they are blocked by policies designed for high-density areas like Tahoe, rather than our rural parcels.

## The Solution: A Unified Rural Lodging Working Group

We urge the Board to use the impetus of AB 518 to **abandon the fragmented and siloed approach** and establish a structured, publicly facing **Working Group** (or utilize the existing SEED Committee) to address Rural Lodging Regulations as a single, cohesive package.

This body must co-create policy in a transparent and inclusive stakeholder engagement process.

### This body would:

- **Integrate AB 518:** Draft low-impact camping regulations that **complement**, rather than conflict with, existing VHR and Ag policies.
- **Consolidate the Conversation:** Bring VHR, Ag Lodging, Camping, and ADU impacts into one room to ensure policies align with the SEED Strategic Plan.
- **Unify The Regulations:** Create **one master ordinance** for ALL Rural Lodging.
- **Include Stakeholders:** Formally include industry representatives to avoid the backlash and costly re-writes we witnessed with the Tobacco and previous VHR ordinances.

### Conclusion

AB 518 offers us a fresh start. Let's use this opportunity to build a comprehensive Rural Lodging framework that protects neighborhoods, empowers property owners, and finally unlocks the economic potential of our working lands.

Respectfully,

**Lauren Hernandez**  
Co-Founder, Our EGG

**Lexi Boeger**  
Co-Founder, Our EGG

**Laurel Brent-Bumb**  
Chief Executive Officer  
El Dorado County  
Chamber of Commerce

**Michael Renalli**  
President, El Dorado  
County Farm Bureau

**Mike Owen**  
President, El Dorado  
County Farm Trails

