



**TESTIMONY ON THE “A FAIR PLAYING FIELD?
INVESTIGATING BIG TECH’S IMPACT ON SMALL BUSINESS.”
BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS, US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

Allyson Cavaretta
Principal/Owner
Meadowmere Resort
Ogunquit, Maine

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Exhibit Supplement

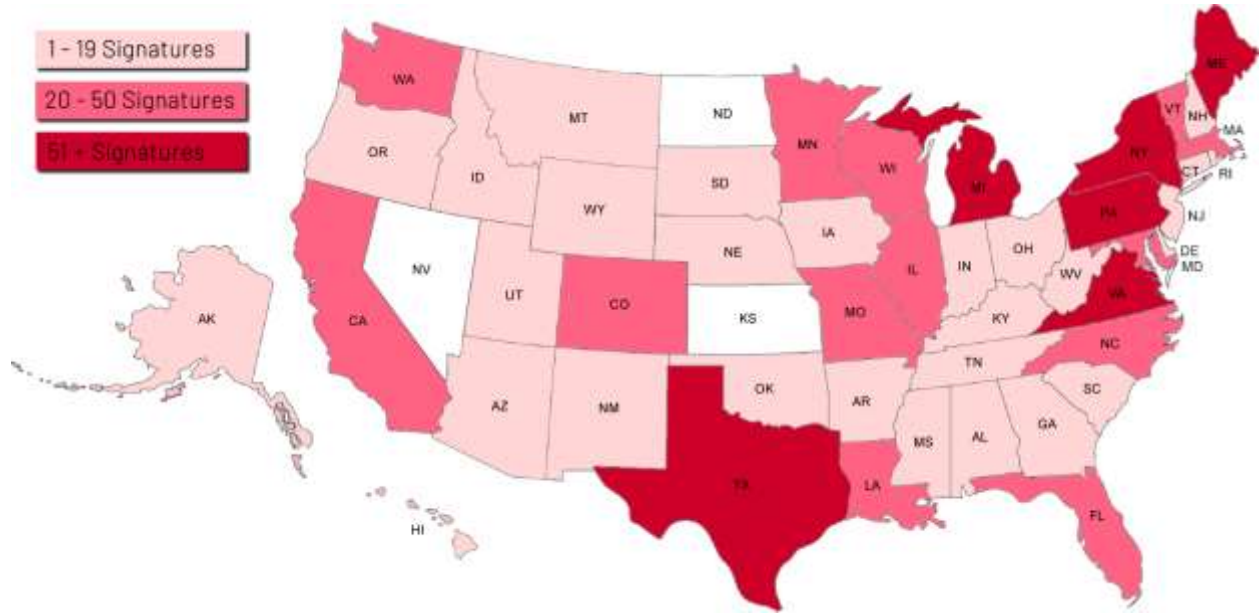
**House Small Business Committee Innkeepers and Hoteliers Petition and
Corresponding Results and Comments**

House Small Business Committee Innkeepers and Hoteliers Petition

We, the undersigned, support the House Small Business Committee in its efforts to insure a level playing field for the Small Business Innkeepers and Hoteliers in the travel industry.

Our reasons for supporting such efforts include:

- 1) Innkeepers and hoteliers lack access to the ‘Posts’ feature given to vacation rentals, doctors and lawyers and other small businesses and are prohibited from this Google product in their Google My Business Knowledge Panel search results. This prevents bed & breakfasts, inns and hotels from being able to offer the option to book direct or share specials in Knowledge Panel.
- 2) Innkeepers and hoteliers lack access to the entire list of features available in Google My Business that would allow the hotel to sell directly, whereas the Online Travel Agents known as Travelocity (owned and operated by Expedia) and Orbitz (owned and operated by Booking.com) have full access to these features that Google offers.
- 3) The direct booking engine efforts of Innkeepers and hoteliers were pushed to ‘below the fold’ and instead are replaced by paid metasearch results since the March 2019 Google Travel update. The impact of this change allows Google to prioritize an area from which it makes money based on impressions and clicks within the metasearch box instead of the hotel’s direct booking engine. The result often misleads the consumer to the highest bidder instead of booking directly with the hotel. The financial resources to compete against the billions and billions of dollars that online travel companies such as Expedia and Booking.com have in order to appear in the metasearch box are simply not afforded to the many small businesses that make up the tourism industry.



STATE	Inkeepers reported as impacted by Google
AK	19
AL	5
AR	15
AZ	10
CA	39
CO	20
CT	6
DE	3
FL	21
GA	11
HI	1
IA	9
ID	2
IL	23
IN	7
KS	0
KY	10
STATE	Inkeepers reported as impacted by Google
LA	21
MA	30
MD	20
ME	59



MI	72
MN	22
MO	28
MS	2
MT	1
NC	36
ND	0
NE	3
NH	16
NJ	12
NM	7
NV	0
NY	65
OH	9
OK	6
OR	11
PA	57
RI	4
SC	5
SD	1
TN	19
TX	56
UT	1
VA	55
VT	24
WA	29
WI	28
WV	6
WY	1

OTHER LOCATIONS	Innkeepers reported as impacted by Google
Canada	3
District of Columbia	4
Mexico	1
Virgin Islands	1



Petition Comments from Innkeepers and Owners organized by State. Also includes comments from neighboring Canadian Inns.

Alaska

- Because of this limitation, we are prevented to be visible as a self-governed entity and are unreachable for direct booking. We are paying 15% booking fee to booking.com and are locked away by them and Google doing direct booking on our sites.
- Thank you for correcting this troublesome practice.
- I want my fair chance to run my business just the same as anyone else.
- This is unfair competition for OTAs to literally buy AdWords of our business names. They are experts when it comes to confuse even our return customers who are booking direct. We constantly hear our customers told us we thought we were booking direct.
- Rigged game is working against small business.
- Small business is the backbone of this Nation. I can't compete on a level playing field.
- Please stop google from doing this!
- The actions of Google, Trip Advisor and all the online travel agencies have effectively blocked travelers from seeing my B&B to the point that my reservations have dropped by more than half. Google give priority placement to big advertising spenders - making it impossible for a small business to compete. They and Trip Advisor not showing our properties at all or erroneously showing us as being sold out when we are not. Trip Advisor actually says our property is not located in the city



of Juneau - where we most definitely are. Google and Trip Advisor are killing our businesses by creating a virtual monopoly which allows 2 online travel agencies to control all travel bookings (Priceline, Agoda & Booking.com are one company and all the others belong to Expedia).

- Thank you for looking into this. Even when “googling” our name specifically, OTAs come up in the ads (though we do not currently offer inventory on any), then when a potential guest clicks on the page they are told by the OTA there is no availability at my establishment and are offered another property through their service.
- How or why we would allow one business to place an ad for another business is beyond me. How did we get here? Greed. Ads should only be able to be paid for by the business themselves and all ads should be under the "original business" in the internet feed.
- Thank you for focusing on issues faced by small businesses.
- They have continued to increase their control of their technology to prevent small business from being able to connect with potential guests. The guests often think they are talking to the B&Bs when they are actually being trapped in Google's cookies.

Arizona

- Our small lodging business has been declining steadily as we've seen our business appearance in search results steadily pushed to the bottom of the page as it replaced more and more by the paid results of Outside Travel Agency.
- Anything you can do to "level" the playing field with Google and the big boys is great and very helpful.



- The status quo allows one major business to leverage ties to other major businesses to divert income to their own pockets. Losers in this scenario are the small business owners who are the backbone of this economy ... and who actually DO pay their fair share of taxes (i.e., do not benefit from egregious tax breaks).
- Please help us to compete on a level playing field against the big guys!!!

Arkansas

- I'm a small innkeeper with just 5 rooms.
- We are a small, five room Inn, in a small tourist town and we simply can't afford to give so much commission to OTA's but we also can't afford not to be listed on their sites. AND if you aren't willing to be listed on their site and give them a huge commission than they tell guests that we have no rooms available. Our occupancy is rather high, but our revenue is down due to such high commissions.
- This is affecting all of the lodging industry

California

- What's being done to hotels by Google and their partners, the Online Travel Agents, Expedia and Booking.com is the classic definition of anti-trust. It must be challenged and stopped. There should be no "pay to play" schemes when the bar is set for only the gorilla.
- We struggle daily to run a successful business - with 15% of my revenue being stolen by Expedia, Booking.com and the rest it is harder and harder to run a small independent company. The large companies steal my website - they are



not our partners they are not selling rooms that I can't sell - that would remain empty - that is all a lie.

- Google's practices hurt my business as I cannot compete with the ad budgets of the OTA's.
- About as close to antitrust as I have ever seen!

Colorado

- In addition to the above a property such as mine that has lost much of it's direct bookings to OTA's and their paid placement online, I now have the added cost of paying commission to organizations like Expedia and Booking.com or the property is otherwise "lost" to the consumer. In order to rank on some OTA's an accelerator is necessary so a guest can find you in the list as Expedia ranks the sort results within their sites based on the compensation the hotel, inn or property is willing to pay. In addition to paying a minimum of 15% commission just to list, a small property may need to pay an accelerator of equal percentage just to show up on page one of the sort results on Expedia. Lastly the influx of Non-Owner-Occupied Vacation Rentals whose growth is virtually unregulated in residential zoned neighborhoods gains an unfair advantage on sites like Expedia with their questionable nightly rate pricing tactics. On Expedia and many OTA's you can search just about any market and find vacation rentals by owner listing their property for a low nightly rate such as \$99 per night yet the total stay for 2 nights might be \$600 when the "fees" the property charges are added in. This is deceptive, predatory pricing that is confusing to consumers and undercuts competitors as low nightly rates are part of the algorithm for placement in these



types of sort. Many hotels and resorts will charge a small property or resort fee in addition to the nightly rate, but it is generally a small fraction of the nightly fee. Vacation Rentals on the other hand are charging in some cases 2 times the amount of the nightly rate in per day fees. A property that advertises \$99 per night yet adds \$200 in daily fee's should be required to list their property at \$299 per night. That type of small print pricing is deceptive and confusing to the consumer, is predatory to competitors and should play no part in the hospitality industry.

District of Columbia

- We have seen direct booking seriously decline over the last couple of years!
- We are alarmed by the decline in direct bookings and very unhappy with the cost of commissions we are paying to OTA's. With the help of Google, they are trading on our name.

Florida

- When we got into the business 22 years ago, we were on a level playing field with others in our industry. That field is not only not level anymore, it's practically unplayable. Small businesses are entitled to the same access as large ones. Large corporations can still make money without doing so at the expense of those of us who are no less determined to be successful, and by having a different set of rules by which to do so. Monopolies came and went at the end of the last century. They were broken up for a reason. Going back there would be a detriment to all but a very, very few. Let's not keep that bad idea going.
- This is critical to our historic inn industry.



- As a small hospitality business, we cannot compete, OTA ads drown out our direct booking efforts. Level the playing field.
- On a daily basis we have multiple customers who thought they were booking directly with our inn but have mistakenly booked with an OTA due to the misleading/confusing presentation of information in Google search results. The result for a small business can be devastating as we find that more and more of our relatively small revenue stream is being siphoned as more and more of our reservations arrive through OTAs rather than directly. Even customers who have booked directly with us for years have booked recently with OTAs due to this new interface. Please consider this measure for a level playing field to ensure that our small businesses can survive.

Hawaii

- For years leading up to the past year or two we have had almost 100% direct organic referral traffic from Google. Now we have to pay Google ads to get the that strong referral support from Google and also pay Expedia.com and Booking.com to see the strength of bookings we used to receive from all organic traffic.

Iowa

- We are a new Inn Opening in 2020 and Fair Representation on Google will have a HUGE impact on building our business and competing with the larger hotels near us.

Illinois

- Small businesses need a more equitable approach.



Kentucky

- I own and operate a bed and breakfast with 3 guest rooms and have a very small marketing budget to work with. As a result of having limited funds to compete, information about my property is so buried that it's difficult for guests to find me.
- It is difficult to compete with OTAs that have been given preferential treatment by Google. The smaller the property, the more important these tools are to continued fiscal health.

Louisiana

- We are struggling with spring flooding in south Louisiana and I struggle. Please allow us to stay afloat.
- Small businesses such as ours are dying out because of this type of treatment by large corporations. We are important to the culture of America and need protection to survive.
- Additionally if a small property isn't listed with one of the major online travel agencies (OTAs) or doesn't list their ENTIRE inventory with the OTAs, those OTAs often present false information to the consuming public that the inn they have just searched for has NO AVAILABILITY, when in fact, there may be availability on that B&B's own website.
- The wording that Google puts into the business listing is often incorrect and uncomplimentary.

Maine



- When a potential guest enters the name of my inn searching for my website, and instead ads from online travel agencies show up and dominate the list with links to THEIR site using name of MY business, that is misleading and deceptive.
- Small business is the backbone of Maine economy. Being unable to compete due to the colossal amount of money involved means more and more small businesses will close or be absorbed by conglomerates, effectively reducing traveler choice and destroying a vibrant community and economy model.
- It is simply outrageous that Google is not treating lodging businesses equally, compared to other types of businesses — as described in the petition. Our guests tell us that they have to make more special efforts than in prior years to find our website directly, and many thought they had booked on our site when really they hadn't. We are a small independent motel with seventeen rooms, and don't have the resources to compete with the Google Ad budgets of the online travel agencies.
- Not only is it expensive, prohibitively so, but also a complicated mire that requires us to hire other professionals for assistance in order to get equal and fair internet search visibility.
- We are a small family run B&B and having travel websites take 20% of our rate at booking has a huge impact on if we can continue running the business. Booking direct is vital for our operation and our family.
- The deeper we dig, the more we will find Google and Facebook are taking advantage of small businesses who have no choice but to pay, even if there is no value to what is being spent.



- We are very frustrated by not being "seen" on these sites since we do not let the travel sites book our guests and take a cut of the action. If you look for hotels in New Harbor on Trip Advisor, we are 29th down on the list where hotels from neighboring towns (Bath, Rockland, Boothbay, Wiscasset, Camden, etc. are shown before our hotel which is IN NEW HARBOR...all because we do not let them make money off our bookings. At some point, small hotels like ours will be pushed out of business. I hope ME has an alternative plan for raising money to support the infrastructure needs and assistance programs needs of the state when the hospitality tax well runs dry!
- We need full access.
- Section 3 is especially applicable to our property.
- The OTA's (online travel agents) pay to have their myriad of clone web sites appear in a search which has the effect of driving our stand-alone sites lower on the search page. When I searched for Wilson Lake Inn tonight, Booking.com appeared over our listing. A search for lodging Wilton Maine shows us in seventh position and there is only one other hotel in town. A picture of our building appears in a google box at the top of the page. If you click on it you are directed to the OTA's. The OTA's exist to hijack our customers and skim the cream off our sales. Most customers are shocked to find out how much they charge us (15% per room per day). The customers often tell us that they thought they were booking directly with us.
- If we were not listed on the OTA's a significant number of potential customers would not find us. They have driven us down the search engine page and have



continuous television and digital advertising telling our customers they will get the best deal through them which is patently untrue.

- I agree wholeheartedly with this petition. I recently spoke with my representative at TripAdvisor and inquired as to why the OTA ads were more pronounced than my website link. I was told they were paying for the advertising space. The sad part is that I pay TripAdvisor to direct bookings to my website and had to search for the link as the OTA ads were so prominent. Independent hotels like myself can't compete with that.
- This is critical for our industry.
- Thank you for looking more closely at how Google, Expedia, and Booking.com operate and impact small business in our industry.
- Help

Maryland

- Please let's level the playing field!
- Please help us to make the playing ground level.
- Once Google began these practices, our revenues dropped by 20%
- With the changes in online booking engines it is harder and harder to find B&B's or independent hotels. Again, highest priority on all of these web products goes to the highest bidder and the small businesses are left in the cold.
- I appreciate that someone is taking this time to challenge a globe controlling company. I must receive 5 to 6 calls daily by Google telling me that my property is not recognized by Google, yet they have me listed and I receive reviews thru their viewers. I'm threatened by the Google representative that my business will



not be validated if I don't have key words embedded on the internet by Google.

The charge for these key words starts off at \$800 and by asking a few more questions the cost can become \$300. Asking if this is the only Google representative the answer is no. I am told, that there are two other authorized companies by Google that demand a fee for these key words to be added to my business name for access by internet searches. How do I know that these key words are added to my business? I am verbally promised the 100% return on my investment, but I then ask how do I follow that promise up??? There is never an answer given to me. Black Mail!

- I no longer have the ability to build my own business standard and integrity. It is now manipulated by Google. It is a monopoly that overrides my ability to control my approach to my customer. Google's algorithm control is NOT a FAIR PRACTICE and needs regulation.
- Google just by their ubiquitous nature leads people to believe they are getting accurate results to a geographic search, when in fact they are getting what Google wants to show them based upon who has paid for the privilege. This is a fraud on the consumer.
- We feel analogous to local retailers who are trying to compete against a tech giant like Amazon.com
- As a small business, we need help fighting the big guys.

Massachusetts

- We also object to new travel search companies "scraping" some portion of our data and publishing our properties on their sites, where they tell travelers that we



have no availability until we go onto their sites, correct missing or incorrect the data and sign up to be listed on their sites (see "Trivago"). This has been going on for years. Our properties are, in effect, held hostage until we "ransom" them with a commitment to be represented by the new company. We demand the right to CHOOSE where and how our properties are listed. And, when we choose, we demand that those companies collect all required data and allow us access to guests' actual addresses and emails so we know exactly who our guests are, how to reach them, when and if they are arriving, and that they are fully aware of and agree to our policies in advance.

- Big tech engines are killing our small business.
- Small businesses struggle will all aspects of doing business as it is, and this makes it more difficult. Large hoteliers with heavy overheads need to make money indeed, but there are many regions that are not fiscally practical for large hotels to enter and the small businesses take up that slack. Allow us to have a fair share.

Michigan

- Our rental cottage -- only a small part of our enterprise -- has more features available in Google My Business than the B&B, which is our primary business. For the cottage, we could write the description and can add promotional or informational posts and even special offers.
- Definitely level the playing field for all types of lodging.
- It is truly unfair and actually unprincipled to slant potential guests only towards where you want them to go instead of giving them freedom to choose. Also,



America stands for free enterprise and should uphold the small business owner and do that in high regard. The majority of the bed and breakfast owners have limited rooms, not much competition against huge hotels. We are trying to make a living, why not allow us that opportunity. We have goods and services to offer as much as the larger corporations. Please let us keep our jobs.

- As a 4 bedroom B&B it is cost prohibitive for me to continue to place space on OTAs. Google has been an entity that has promoted me, but also makes it difficult for guests to book directly by making it appear that booking agents like Expedia are cheaper, when in reality they costs the guest and myself much more. All we are asking is for an equal playing field. Our direct booking should be allowed and at a price that we can afford. Thank you.
- This is a case of big money trying to control small bed & breakfasts / hotel bookings and profits. Google is advocating for the OTAs to provide an average renovation product at an excessive cost to the industry.
- This is very important to small business such as us. I hear the confusion from guests all the time and many thought they were booking with us direct but actually weren't costing everyone more money. Please consider this petition!
- For a small, 4 room property in a seasonal market, the online OTA's are putting us out of business. We have been a destination property for more than 18 years and have brought much commerce to our local and surrounding communities. We have prided ourselves on being a top-of-the-line property and being a shining star in Michigan's small business community. We don't want to close, but when your business (even return guests) are misled to book anywhere but our own



website, well, we just can't compete. This is extremely unfair and should be illegal. We are too small to fight them at a battle we just can't win. We need your support.

- Please support our local businesses by granting fair representation to our properties.
- Please help us solve this inequity. The Bed and Breakfast business is very fragile.
- We prefer direct bookings because we are a small Bed and Breakfast and feel more secure for ourselves and our guests, when we have the opportunity to connect with our potential guests personally when making reservations with us.
- Please help small business survive in the big box business world. We are where the people are at!
- Booking Direct is essential to us since we are a small business and feel more secure having personal contact not only ourselves but for those who book with us.
- With 5-star reviews and an excellent location in a university town my occupancy rate has diminished steadily. When I asked booking.com their insights on this they said, "people can't find me, think of booking.com as an acquisition tool". Clearly small businesses are at a disadvantage here - either the inn must accept a 15% reduction in income for their work or the public must pay 15% more for services across the board.



- Google is hijacking the essence of free enterprise and the small business owner. They have no right to monopolize the system. It is not only unfair but immoral and a social injustice.
- This has been unfair to us for way too long please hold them accountable for the business we've lost due to these unfair practices.
- It is impossible for a small business to correct misinformation about their business on sites like Google, Facebook, Booking.com, Expedia, Yelp. Information like number of rooms, hours of operation, description of business. These are basic pieces of information and 1) it is difficult to impossible to reach a person to address your issues, and 2) most of the time they will only correct it if you sign up for their premium service OR they say they don't control the information that they are displaying and that it is coming from a general source or database, the contact information for which they don't know or won't provide.
- This has to stop, and they need penalties for our loss of business

Minnesota

- All lodging facilities, large or small, should have a level playing field.
- As a small business, having large companies harming us at our expense is a horrible way to do business.

Mississippi

- These are very important and maddening situations. Change is definitely needed.

Missouri



- Thank for taking this on--strongly agree with all three reasons. And for me April 2019 was like a switch had been thrown--slowest April since my first in 2006. Other months have been below last year's as well as below last 5 years average.
- Fair practices and access for all small businesses across the board.
- Let's level the playing field and make things equal. How can Google be allowed to do this?
- I could never get Google to tell me why the book now button went to an OTA instead of my website.
- As a small business owner, I would simply ask for a level playing field.
- I do not have the budget of the big OTA's such as Expedia all I want is a level playing field.
- This really does have an effect on our business. Thanks for helping get this issue fixed.
- Please find out how we can stop Google from using fake telephone numbers on order to call and harass Innkeepers into paid advertising under the guise of updating your free listing.

Nebraska

- Just looking for a fair and level playing field for all.

New Hampshire

- The placement of each inn's official web site at the head on its search page would be a start to correct all these problems.
- I fully support this endeavor. Google's practices here are monopolistic, and their stated mission is to usurp competitive advantage through unfair practices.



- Thank you for your efforts!
- What's happening is not fair trade.

New Jersey

- Being a small Mom and Pop Inn, we just cannot compete with the Online Travel Services and their high commission rates in the environment created by Google and others like TripAdvisor.
- Fairness always means a level playing field.
- After 28 years in business, it's been really hard to continue with my business due to the impact of online travel agents and their billion marketing dollars. They just are gobbling up my revenue dollars and charging at least at 15-20% commissions. Please level the playing fields for our small business Inns.

New York

- Not asking for anything other than a level playing field and fairness.
- OTA fees are becoming extravagant! Please do what you can to keep them at a reasonable rate \$10 or 10% 15 and 20% is too high!
- Google's algorithm changes have had a severe negative impact on my 30-year-old business, off 40%.
- Please fight for us little guys!
- Please level this playing field. We are all going out of business.
- We require and demand fairness on this platform!!
- It is like being forced to pay protection money to rent rooms.



- Can a class action lawsuit be filed against Google who fails to prevent malicious harm being heaped on small hotels and B&Bs, which ultimately leads to putting the B&Bs out of business?
- Please HELP! This is out of CONTROL!
- Our Village has to put moratorium on Home Rentals as over 50% of our small Village became Home Rentals by developers forcing local people out of affordable housing for local jobs - including critical emergency First Responder positions that threaten everyone!
- The loss of visibility on google searches has created a decline in my direct booking business of more than 20%.
- These practices need to stop.
- It is not a level playing field for small operators. Hotels and larger operators have an advantage.
- We need support!
- No matter how unfounded, anyone is allowed by these companies to write and post negative reviews about a business multiple times.
- Our business has changed drastically in the past year- while we do not begrudge paying a commission for new guests to find us through the OTA's we are frustrated by the fact that it has become virtually the only way people are finding us due to the manipulation of Google to funnel all searches through one of their profit centers. Also, while our business has increased with the OTA bookings, we are not sure of our net returns because of the high commission and the pressure to post low rates. We are competing against properties that do not offer



amenities and services that we do but it's hard to show how we differ from one another due to limitations imposed by the different platforms.

- Please help save the small business owners from the big corporate hijackers of our websites and availability
- I've enjoyed a very successful business for the past eight years. I have lost as much as 30% of revenue over the last 3 years due to my website not being found anymore. OTA's have the buying power to rank as king with google. I also have purchased Google Ads in addition to my other advertising and am hardly receiving any conversions.
- Level the playing field, and SUPPORT SMALL BUSINESS!!
- I'm in business since 1984. We do everything within the rules and laws, but we are being very affected by everything around us. Everyone seems to have their hand in the pocket of the small, independent, legitimate business.

North Carolina

- It seems Google only wants to play with the BIG BOYS, it wasn't always that way
- SAD
- Our segment of the lodging needs your support.
- Please help support our small businesses. Google is killing us.
- We have been affected. The robo calls to get us to pay for a better listing are so frequent that I have to screen all my calls.
- Please hear us.
- The deck is continuously being stacked against small businesses; however, we make up the largest segment of the business population. Most of us have to sign



up with the OTA's to survive and then we have to compete against them for our own business share. It's not fair we cannot compete! We're just asking for a level playing field.

- Please level the playing field.
- The collusion between Google and the two Online Travel Agencies, Expedia and Booking.com has had the effect of extorting small lodging businesses like ours into paying 15-18% of our income in order to reach customers that we previously reached directly through our websites. In order to stay in business, we had to allow our rooms to be booked by the OTAs. The one room that I did not open to them because I couldn't adequately describe the room on their sites went from a 60% occupancy rate to 47% as a result. Many of our guests don't even realize that they were not on our website when they booked and feel deceived. Help small businesses compete by forcing these mega-companies to at the very least be transparent about their practices.

Ohio

- Even though I am retired after 20 rewarding years in such a unique business, I am still involved in the local & state associations. I have always advocated for a "level playing field". Thus, I wish to add my name to this.

Oklahoma

- We have decided to rent our entire house due to all the hoops we are having to jump through just to rent a room. We will be using a management company now and let them deal with all of it. By the way, the cabin management companies are struggling also.



Oregon

- All of us small B&Bs are struggling due to preferential treatment of online booking groups (Travelocity, booking.com etc.) AND lack of regulation of VRBOs (vacation rentals by owner) and AirBNB - most properties in these groups are not regulated or licensed. Please take some action to help the small business owners of bed and breakfasts!
- Thank you for your support for small business owners. We certainly struggle as a single entity. As it becomes more and more competitive in this world of online growing social media and OTA's small business enterprises are disappearing at an alarming rate. I see it in our small town of Ashland, Oregon. In the late 80's there were approximately 37 Bed and Breakfasts here, now there are less than 12. The hotels and vacation rentals are offering accommodation that is cheaper than we can offer. They can afford to spread their overheads because they are much larger than us i.e. hotels and the vacation rentals because many of them are not registered and are not paying the same fees as us.
- 18% commission to OTA, at least 3% to credit card companies, plus 3% for the channel manager, minus operating cost. It doesn't make it easy for small independent roadside motels.
- Thank you for this. The entire notion of what modern travelers want is unique, authentic, genuine experiences, and that is what independent hotels provide. The notion we have to pay upwards of 20%+ vs the large box brands who have commissions as low as 10% is unfair, and we're always isolated and taken



advantage of by tech and their incremental fees, charges, etc. It's wonderful that someone is taking this on. Bravo.

Pennsylvania

- All businesses need an equal playing field. Current practices described above are like extortion.
- Please help really small businesses be able to work alongside and with the big players in the Internet world. Thank you!
- Thank you for considering what is best for our small businesses in Pennsylvania.
- Please help us small businesses get our properties and reservations back!
Thanks so much for any help in this matter.
- This is a real problem. We often have guests who believed they were on our website when they booked, only to find out later, they were misled by OTAs posing as our inn. We lose money and the customer is dissatisfied. The OTAs are using our business name to skim money off of our income without our permission. I list with them but do not give them permission to pose as our inn. In addition, they claim that there is no cancellation fee when our inn has a cancellation fee. They really are saying the OTA has no fee, but they don't tell the guests that the inn does. The guests don't understand their commitment.
- Small businesses, including owner-occupied unique hospitality properties, are the lifeblood of the U.S. economy: they create two-thirds of net new jobs and drive U.S. innovation and competitiveness. A new report shows that they account for 44 percent of U.S. economic activity. Google is crippling these small businesses.



- My bookings have decreased drastically...I ask for a level playing field. I have to play by all the rules, pay commercial rates for utilities, have to live on premises, pay for signage, provide parking, adhere to zoning laws and more. The fees for the OTA's are so high for a small business, but I have to be with them as direct bookings are way down. Help is needed. 26 years in business and it has come to this.
- Google should not be permitted to dominate business to the exclusion of equal opportunities for all!
- Google is engaging in unfair practices.
- This is a deceptive and reprehensible practice by corporate and big business to pick the pockets of the sole proprietorships that sustain our democracy.
- When some of my repeat guests have searched for my Inn via google, Google brings up a list of all the sites advertising my Inn, then highlights one which deceptively states "actual website," such that the guest thinks they'll be taken to my direct site, when it actually takes them to the "Google Ads" listing of my B&B. This is grossly unfair AND deceptive.
- Google has diverted many guests to OTA's or themselves via Google Hotel instead of my direct website. The huge corporations are continually taking more and more revenue from small business owners. We cannot compete with their huge marketing budgets.
- My business has been impacted negatively as these unfair practices hinder my ability to reach customers. Thank you for your efforts.

South Carolina



- Yes, this is an issue. Just as the operation of unlicensed, uninsured AirB&B properties are.
- These unfair practices affect our small business greatly. Our guests are often surprised to find that they have inadvertently reserved through the Online Travel Agency that they were led to, instead of through our website as they thought.

Tennessee

- TripAdvisor must be paying the most to google and presents us as no availability (misleading the public as we have no rooms rented at all most of the time)—does say to call the property (with no phone number) and has a complicated system to show up at all that includes lots of money paid to them every month. At least the OTA's you can sign up with free and we have done that to survive, so they benefit, and I imagine google benefits as they show up first. Good luck straightening all this out!
- We have already written numerous emails to the Google Team to change that.
- Action now please!
- Help!
- The high commission rates imposed by these 3rd party sites are harmful to we small businesses. I've had many guests that didn't realize they were being fooled into booking thru a different site and not my website. Small businesses are the backbone of our country. Level the field honestly!
- As a small Appalachian mountain getaway, I did very well with my website, various press stories and referrals and other word of mouth. But since the small listing websites have been bought up creating a monster, my website cannot



even get on page 2 of Google much less page 1. And I do not have the financial resources to pay to appear on page 1 or 2. I have been in business since May 1998 and not sure how much longer I can continue unless there are some changes made in the way small properties like mine (4 rooms and 2 rental homes) are found on Google, Yahoo and Bing.

- Future Innkeepers care too!

Texas

- As a bed and breakfast owner we have found the inability to use all of Google's tools frustrating. The lodging industry is, in my opinion is being blackmailed by Google and the online travel agencies.
- We need your help to be on an even "playing field" PLEASE.
- This is the 32nd year for our bed and breakfast. This is the full-time occupation for 2 people... myself and my adult son. It is not just a hobby. We have invested hard earned money over the years to make our property more and more comfortable and fun for our guests. We, of course, have worked hard 1000's of hours. In or 32 years we have been honored with many repeat guestsand the guests 'children who are now adults with young children. One family has stayed several days every Thanksgiving, except for one. Since 1993. That is just one of many examples. We definitely are experiencing financial issues due to the information detailed above. A serious remedy needs to be implemented as soon as possible.
- I need to add that our property has 10 rooms.... which means that we provide jobs for many people other than ourselves, the owners. They do many



duties...cook, clean, yard work, greet guests, take reservations by phone and synchronize the paper calendar with our online reservation calendar, to mention a few. My partner, my adult son and I have our hands full with the bookkeeping and financial matters, grocery shopping for 20+ guests and being gracious hosts for our wonderful guests. We call that last part "THE FUN PART" ... which it IS. That atmosphere is one reason guests come to bed and breakfasts!! Please remember that we provide jobs daily employee described above AND often for upkeep ... anywhere from plumbing, carpentry, full yard work, painting, etc. If reservations are diminished by the means you have described in the petition above (and they were last year), many small businesses may go bankrupt and many wonderful employees will lose their jobs. Thank you for this petition to address this issue.

- Our booking revenue is on schedule to decrease by nearly 30% this year. We are being severely affected by the giants of the internet and would like a level playing field!

Vermont

- Just as an example we recently had a group decide to have their members stay at our B&B. They all booked online by searching on Google for our property. Even though the information about the B&B would have shown up directly in the search, all but one ending up booking, probably unknowingly, via one of the Expedia sites. This result was almost certainly because that's where the "Book a Room" button linked to, and that button is much more prominent than the link to "Website" to reach our property. Once a prospective guest clicks "Book a Room"



there is no path to book directly at the B&B, all the options are OTAs. The guest likely has no idea at that point that they could have had the option to book direct. This is a blatant example of where Google's search results page drives commissions from our B&B bottom line to their OTA partners, while providing no value to the guest or ourselves.

- We really don't understand why if someone puts in our name (The Vermont Inn) the search has paid ads for OTAs first and we're below the "fold" on the searches. This often negates the ability of the searcher to book direct with us.
- Google should remain a search engine, as was intended in its original vision, moving users off its site and out into the diverse marketplace to view and choose their lodging. Google should also give small independent businesses a chance to compete against the travel channels for direct bookings.
- I have contacted Peter Welch, who responded and acknowledged the burden small business carries due to Google's practices.
- Please help support small business by legislating to prevent Google and other high-tech giants from using their Trust-like powers to overwhelm and decimate our market!
- I have been battling with Expedia since May because they "lost" my BedandBreakfast.com listing and have not replaced it. This is yet another example of the abuses of these OTAs. I have lost \$35,000 this tourist season as a result of this and Google.
- Expedia purchased the old BedandBreakfast.com booking site and many establishments lost their webpage as well as their city disappearing. At first, they



denied they bought out this website and strongly suggested we go to the pay and play format with them. Finally, they acknowledged after months of hounding that they did indeed own the site. To this day our listing has not been restored and it appears will not be restored any time soon. It appears it is a pathway for them to drive all business to their cookie cutter format.

- Please vote to help the businesses who invest in the legal infrastructure of the hospitality business through licenses, permits, insurance, and taxes to keep their state and community thriving.
- Level the playing field

Virginia

- If the playing field is not leveled soon, we will be closing our doors and filing bankruptcy.
- They've purposely made it difficult and confusing for people to click on my website because they want to force me into paying them a percentage for their booking service (similar to Expedia).
- Size & mega marketing dollars together with ability to INSERT ITSELF between the potential guests and the small B&TB, Hotel, Vacation Rental Owner, makes it impossible for the consumer to find and book directly with such small businesses - a true monopoly of the lodging business.
- On # 3 "The result often misleads", I would use stronger language. The word I would choose "extremely deceptive". I frequently have guests tell me they thought they booked directly on my site.



- When we purchased the Inn in 2014, we had an occupancy rate of over 50%. We continue to spend more on advertising trying to compete against the OTA's who spend more on ads than I earn. We watch our occupancy drop 2-3% annually. As a destination off the beaten path, we relied on folks finding us using simple searches. Now when I search our area or Inn by name, I see hotels offered by Expedia, etc. 50 miles from us and we are listed somewhere off the page. We continue to get 5-star reviews consistently on Google and TripAdvisor, etc. Nothing in the way the Inn has operated has changed except folks finding us.
- Google has put small business owners of bed and breakfasts and hotels at a disadvantage in search engines! Please support the House Small Business Committee in its efforts to provide a level playing field for the small business Innkeepers and Hoteliers in the Travel and Tourism industries!
- We have watched our Inn placement on Google searches drop yearly since all the OTA's pay more money to promote their vast hotels for more money than we earn in a year. We have had a significant drop in listing us on Google searches to way below paid ads, OTAs, VRBO, Airbnb. Even when I directly put in my website address!!! As a property who consistently receives 5-star reviews, we watch our numbers decrease annually and when we search online, have dropped from the first page to somewhere far below. Trip advisor also expects us to pay for what was once a free place for guests to check our reputation. Now we are replaced by other "Suggested" properties.
- Please allow us an even playing field
- THANKS for educating me and others on this issue. Let's level the playing field!



- We will be out of business within the next year if something does not change with this. Until 2 to 3 years ago we thrived for 12 years!

Washington

- For properties that are not currently listing with Expedia or Booking.com or their partners, the problem is even worse. Search results may not even display our property on the first page at all.
- We have had a large drop in our business where guests are unable to find us unless we open up our properties to OTA's and Google Ads. We are told countless times that it was hard to find us and also that guests thought we had no rooms available as OTA's state this or that we are sold out when we do not have our property opened up to OTA's who are charging a large commission that B & B's with only 3 units such as ours are having a tough time.
- There is no fair competition between gigantic OTA's and small businesses for reservations. Besides being almost impossible to understand the analytics and restrictive nature of the system, it requires enormous amounts of money to put into ads to ""buy your way"" to the top of the list. Unfair to say the least.
- The impact of large tech on small lodging is negative and is costing us collectively millions of dollars in lost revenue. They must be controlled so we can survive.
- With only 2 rooms there is no way we ever show up against the OTA's
- I only have a few rooms and am a small business. The cost of using a booking site vs booking direct is too much for my bottom line. Please make booking direct an option for me.



- Their star ranking is not fair, giving priority to businesses that advertise with OTA's.
- The deck is really stacked against the small proprietors who run these bed and breakfast establishments. We are active parts of our community, contributing to the economy in meaningful ways. We work long, hard hours to build incredible experiences for our guests that translate to outstanding reviews, only to find that our hard work is being co-opted by large corporations who don't even care if we have availability or about the time and costs we incur to build our businesses. Most of us are paying those same companies large commissions to bring guests to us. To find that these same companies are now pulling potential guests away from our Google business listing, under the guise of booking directly with us, is frustrating at best, and an unfair advantage that cuts directly into our meager profits. None of us gets into this business to make a lot of money, but we should at least be given a fair shot at profiting off our own efforts.
- Google needs to be fair to all.
- The massive OTA's and Google with their corner on the hotel ad market completely blocks out access by small independent properties. It's a nightmare even trying to compete - and definitely not a level playing field. Control needs to be relinquished when it comes to social media ad buys and access to "bookdirect" information.
- We need a fair playing field.
- This is a huge issue!

West Virginia



- These issues cause small businesses to be placed at a clear disadvantage only because they are small, not because they offer an inferior product. Changes like these will greatly enhance the survival rate for small, family owned entrepreneur-type businesses!

Wisconsin

- Third Party marketing vendors are now creating platforms for small businesses to create less expensive Google Hotel Ads, however this also is very costly for trying to obtain direct bookings online.
- I have had many guests tell me they assume the information showing in this area on google links directly to my direct booking site. They are shocked and frustrated to find that they have not actually booked directly with a small business. I feel this is not only unfair to the small business innkeepers, but also dishonest business practice on the part of Google, Booking.com and Expedia.
- Our sales have dropped considerably since this practice of below the fold has gone into effect. Our click to our website is at about 23% of what it's been in past years.
- Big Google putting down the small business is very frustrating!
- In addition to the bias reservation technology, people who post reviews on Google Business, are not required to authenticate their experience. Thus anyone, i.e., a competitor, unhappy neighbor, soothsayer, can post a review and Google will not remove false claims.
- Level the playing field to include B&B's.
- Stand up for the small business which can't buy support.



Canada

- While not a US based Inn, the issue is global in reach and the US as a world leader needs to take a stand.
- The big guys always have the advantage of being big but in fairness we little guys should also be able to access any advantage the big guys have. We are too small to negatively impact those big guys, but small businesses are the backbone of the economy. Help us be competitive.
- The wonderful things TripAdvisor and Google do are overshadowed by the restrictions and preferential treatment given to some of the OTAs. That should STOP!