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JUN 24 2025

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Public Comment  
J.2

AB 518

From Season George <bornseasoned@gmail.com>

Date Tue 6/24/2025 11:12 AM

To Bushnell, Michelle <mbushnell@co.humboldt.ca.us>; Arroyo, Natalie <narroyo@co.humboldt.ca.us>; Madrone, Steve <smadrone@co.humboldt.ca.us>; COB <COB@co.humboldt.ca.us>; Wilson, Mike <Mike.Wilson@co.humboldt.ca.us>; Bohn, Rex <RBohn@co.humboldt.ca.us>

**Caution:** This email was sent from an EXTERNAL source. Please take care when clicking links or opening attachments.

Subject: Vote NO on opposition to AB 518 (Item J2)

Dear Humboldt Board of Supervisors,

I am a resident of Humboldt County and I am asking that you vote "No" on Item J2, Supervisor Wilson's proposed opposition to Assembly Bill 518. AB 518 would remove expensive and unnecessary state development requirements for landowners looking to work with the county to host a small number of recreational campsites on their land.

We should be giving landowners more tools to make ends meet in Humboldt County, not fewer. Do not oppose AB 518 -- support it!

Thank you ,

Season George

JUN 24 2025

Vote NO on opposition to AB 518 (Item J2)

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

From Katherine Sternberg <phuzzvic1@icloud.com>

Date Tue 6/24/2025 12:03 AM

To COB <COB@co.humboldt.ca.us>; Bohn, Rex <RBohn@co.humboldt.ca.us>; Bushnell, Michelle <mbushnell@co.humboldt.ca.us>; Arroyo, Natalie <narroyo@co.humboldt.ca.us>; Madrone, Steve <smadrone@co.humboldt.ca.us>; Wilson, Mike <Mike.Wilson@co.humboldt.ca.us>

Public Comment  
J.2

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Dear Humboldt Board of Supervisors,

I am a resident of Humboldt County and I am asking that you vote "No" on Item J2, Supervisor Wilson's proposed opposition to Assembly Bill 518. AB 518 would remove expensive and unnecessary state development requirements for landowners looking to work with the county to host a small number of recreational campsites on their land.

We should be giving landowners more tools to make ends meet in Humboldt County, not fewer. Do not oppose AB 518 -- support it!

Thank you, Katherine Sternberg

Sent from my iPhone

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No on item J2

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Public Comment  
J.2

From mermaidiva@aol.com <mermaidiva@aol.com>

Date Tue 6/24/2025 7:33 AM

To COB <COB@co.humboldt.ca.us>

**Caution:** This email was sent from an EXTERNAL source. Please take care when clicking links or opening attachments.

Attention: Humboldt Board of Supervisors,

I am a resident of Willow Creek and I am asking that you vote "No" on Item J2,

Supervisor Wilson's proposed opposition to Assembly Bill 518. AB 518 would remove expensive and unnecessary state development requirements for landowners looking to work with the county to host a small number of recreational campsites on their land.

We should be giving landowners more tools to make ends meet in Humboldt County, not fewer. Do not oppose AB 518 -- support it!

Thank you,  
Tara Fulgenzi



Outlook

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JUN 24 2025

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Public comment  
on J.2

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Vote NO on opposition to AB 518 (Item J2)

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From Bryon &lt;bryonrd@gmail.com&gt;

Date Tue 6/24/2025 8:30 AM

To COB &lt;COB@co.humboldt.ca.us&gt;

**Caution:** This email was sent from an EXTERNAL source. Please take care when clicking links or opening attachments.

Dear Humboldt Board of Supervisors,

My family and I are new residents of Southern Humboldt and we are asking that you vote "No" on Item J2. Supervisor Wilson's proposed opposition to Assembly Bill 518. AB 518 would remove expensive and unnecessary state development requirements for landowners looking to work with the county to host a small number of recreational campsites on their land.

We are star hosts on HipCamp and our ability to host tourists on our property is one of the ways we're able to make life work in Southern Humboldt. Tourism is the new industry in Southern Humboldt and we ask that you give landowners more tools to make ends meet in Humboldt County, not fewer. Do not oppose AB 518 -- support it!

Thank you,



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BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Public comment  
on J-2

June 23, 2025

Humboldt County Board of Supervisors  
825 5th Street, Room 111  
Eureka, California

Re. Agenda Item J2:

Dear Chair Bushnell and Humboldt County Board of Supervisors,

Thank you for the opportunity to offer comments on Supervisor Wilson's proposed amendments to California Assembly Bill 518, introduced by Assembly Member Ward and co-authored by Assembly Members Rogers, Ortega, and Connolly.

We appreciate the Board of Supervisors' attention to this legislation and are glad to see the County engaging with the intent and potential benefits of AB 518. We are writing to offer a few clarifications, as **all of the concerns raised in Supervisor Wilson's proposed letter of opposition are addressed in the bill** and standards to ensure human health, environmental safety, agricultural protection, and local control are **already in place**. Given this, and on behalf of the 35+ conservation, recreation, and agricultural organizations listed in the attached coalition letter, **we respectfully urge the Board to vote "No" on Item J2 and instead support AB 518 as written**.

Currently, state law requires that landowners obtain both a local permit and a state permit to operate more than one campsite. The state permit, originally designed for mobile home parks and large-scale commercial campgrounds, is a duplicative and costly process for well-managed, small-scale camping areas that already have local approval – and it comes with development requirements that are incompatible with agricultural production, rural character, and the preservation of open space. **AB 518 simply removes the requirement for a state permit for qualifying landowners who already have local permission to host campers.**

In addition, AB 518 has an opt-in clause for counties. It is not a mandate and is intended to affirm local control and provide options for counties that want to support low-intensity camping and camping-based agritourism uses, without imposing any requirements on those that don't. Humboldt County does not have to allow low-impact camping locally. If Humboldt County does decide to opt-in to the exemption created by AB 518 and draft an ordinance to support low-impact camping, **AB 518 sets the floor – not the ceiling – for these uses.**

We are excited to see Humboldt County support the development of additional camping opportunities to enhance rural and farm-based tourism income and provide more low-cost recreational access. We share Supervisor Wilson's perspective that these uses must be well-managed. With this in mind, we have worked closely in coalition with dozens of organizations across the state as well as with Assembly Member Ward to ensure AB 518 establishes a minimum set of standards that will increase health, environmental, and agricultural protections for low-impact camping areas while affirming local control for land use decisions –

- **Enhanced Local Control:** AB 518 returns the right to regulate small-scale camping to counties without imposing a one-size-fits-all state mandate about how to do so. AB 518 does not require a county to authorize low-impact camping. It establishes minimum requirements for a county that, by ordinance, elects to authorize low-impact camping. These ordinances exist across the state and it would limit the local control of other jurisdictions to impose at the state level an additional set of standards and requirements. Land use is primarily a local issue -- municipal and county governments know best if, where, and how to offer this type of camping safely if they want to do so. Humboldt County can create locally-relevant standards that will support and manage these uses via an ordinance.
  - Today, issues related to safety and environmental health at small-scale camping areas are already handled by local code enforcement -- not by the state. Nothing will change as AB 518 does not grant any landowner the right to create new camping areas without going through the proper permitting channels at the local level.
  - AB 518 already requires that all online hosting platforms provide a means for the operator of a low-impact camping area to include any permit or registration number required by the county on the online listing.
- **Safety and Environmental Standards:** AB 518 already requires low-impact camping areas to comply with applicable state and local fire safety requirements. In fact, the environmental and safety requirements in AB 518 are exactly the same as in existing state law under the Special Occupancy Parks Act. Other counties have created their own fire and environmental safety standards in addition to those required in the bill and by the state. Humboldt County may choose to create additional requirements as well.
  - AB 518 does not loosen environmental or safety standards at low-impact camping areas. The state already defaults to local regulations on fire safety, human health, and environmental impacts for small-scale camping. AB 518 simply exempts qualifying landowners who already have local approval to host campers from burdensome state development standards that include floodlighting, paved roads, and built and gendered bathhouses.
  - California's Joint Strategy for Sustainable Recreation and Wildlife Resilience makes it very clear that the state does not intend to halt recreation in the face of changing climate and longer fire season. Instead, the strategy recommends diversifying recreation opportunities to ensure families can continue to get outside while supporting rural economies.
- **Agricultural and Timber Land Protections:** AB 518 already limits the number of campsites per property to 9 and sets a density limit of 1 site per acre (so if you have a 5 acre property, you can only have 5 sites). In addition, AB 518 has strong support from the California Farm Bureau Federation, California Certified Organic Farmers, Community Alliance with Family Farmers, and a number of farm trail organizations specifically *because* it will support the viability of working landscapes and create economic opportunities for farmers that are compatible with agricultural production and accessible from a cost and permitting perspective. Humboldt County may choose to further restrict camping activities on working farms and ranches locally; AB 518 just establishes minimum requirements for a county that,

by ordinance, elects to authorize low-impact camping. Counties are encouraged to write additional regulations as is appropriate within their jurisdiction.

- **Infrastructure Standards:** AB 518 requires that low-impact camping areas comply with all applicable local requirements including for the disposal of human waste and trash, as well as local zoning, permit, lot size, and setback requirements. It also requires that, in the absence of applicable local requirements, low-impact camping areas maintain sanitation facilities that are fully-self contained or connected to a permitted sewage disposal system and remove all garbage from the premises after each occupancy. Counties already have their own standards for these uses and Humboldt County may introduce additional infrastructure standards as well. Individual counties are the entities best suited to determine where and how they want to manage these concerns.
- **On-Site Management Requirements:** AB 518 requires that a property manager be available by phone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This requirement is the minimum, and a number of counties have already introduced their own hosting standards with additional requirements. Humboldt County could do the same, but the state shouldn't impose additional requirements on other counties that are best suited to determine what is appropriate for their own communities.

AB 518 is critical to expanding access to the outdoors across California, supporting rural tourism economies, and diversifying income for farmers and ranchers. By creating a new framework for camping at the state level, AB 518 removes unnecessary and expensive state barriers, giving local governments the chance to opt-in to creating options for rural and agricultural landowners to host low-impact camping on their properties.

Low-impact camping harnesses the financial power of outdoor recreation to create sustainable revenue for farmers, landowners, and small businesses while supporting conservation of valuable, undeveloped landscapes. For these reasons and on behalf of the organizations listed in the attached coalition letter, we respectfully ask the Board to consider supporting Assembly Bill 518 without qualification.

Sincerely,

Cassandra Prenn-Vasilakis  
Senior Manager, Government and Community Relations, Hipcamp, Inc.  
[cassandra@hipcamp.com](mailto:cassandra@hipcamp.com)





## **CA Assembly Bill 518 - Low Impact Camping Areas Act**

**Author - California State Assembly Member Chris Ward**

*Passed Assembly Floor 63-0 (May 12, 2025)*

*Passed Assembly Housing Committee 11-1 (April 9, 2025)*

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### **California needs more campsites to help families get outside.**

Outdoor recreation hit a record high in 2022 with more than 19 million Californians getting outside. California's outdoor recreation economy - one of the largest economic drivers in the state - is worth an estimated \$81.5 billion. However, over half of all campers report difficulty finding or booking available campsites, up from only 10% in 2019. Millions of Californians also struggle with the high cost of booking overnight accommodations, especially in heavily touristed areas. Assembly Bill 518 would create more opportunities for camping by establishing a framework to support well-managed private campsites and returning local control over this land use to local government. In turn, AB 518 will increase access to the outdoors and support sustainable tourism and economic development statewide.

### **What problems does Assembly Bill 518 address?**

CA state law currently states that camping areas of any type with two or more campsites need a permit to operate through the CA Department of Community and Housing Development (HCD) **in addition to** a local land-use permit offered by the county or municipal government. The law that governs campgrounds - the Special Occupancy Parks Act (SOPA) - was designed specifically to regulate and permit large commercial campgrounds, RV parks, and mobile home developments - not small, low-impact campsites on a farm, ranch, or rural private land. The process of getting a permit through HCD can take years and cost tens of thousands of dollars, which means that landowners who want to offer limited camping on their properties - even those who get approved at the local level - are effectively priced out of doing so.

AB 518 creates a new category of camping in SOPA for "low impact camping areas" (LICAs) and introduces a new framework for this type of land use that differentiates it from large-scale commercial campgrounds. If camping areas can meet this new definition of "low impact camping areas," **and exist within a county that authorizes low impact camping**, they would then **only need the required local permits** and be exempted from additional HCD permitting. The benefits of this differentiation in the code are as follows:



- Affirm local control over land use decisions and low-impact camping on private lands. Land use is primarily a local issue – municipal and county governments know where and how to offer this type of camping safely if they want to do so. **AB 518 does not supersede local regulations** by allowing or requiring any LICAs without local approval. Should AB 518 become law, local governments do not have to allow LICAs in their area even if they meet the state definition laid out in AB 518. Rather, local governments would have to **opt into the state exemption** and update their land use codes to govern LICAs as they see fit should they choose to do so.
- Reduce barriers to entry for landowners interested in offering low-impact camping on their properties. As long as they are approved by their local government, landowners would not need to pursue an expensive and time-intensive state permit.
- Support rural economies, agritourism, and agricultural landscapes by creating new revenue streams for rural landowners, farmers, and ranchers.
- Support the state's goals of providing affordable access to the outdoors and conserving private land. This includes Priority 1.10 in California's "Outdoors for All" Strategy that calls on the state to partner with local governments and landowners to create low-impact camping regulations.

## What would "low impact camping areas" look like?

To qualify as a LICA under AB 518 a camping area must meet all of the following criteria and have local authority to operate from a county that opts-into the state exemption:

- Maximum number of sites: 9 or fewer campsites total per property
- Acreage minimum: 2 acres
- Density limits: 1 campsite/acre
- Parking: no on-street parking allowed
- Zoning requirements: property is not within an urban or suburban area
- Hosted: a property manager or operator must be available 24/7
- Health and safety: complies with all local regulations, including those that cover the disposal of trash, human waste, fire safety, and noise management
- Rented for no more than 14 consecutive nights per camper and not exceeding 28 nights per calendar year per camper

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## Frequently asked questions

### Would Assembly Bill 518 change the regulatory burden for local governments?

No, AB 518 does not supersede or require local governments to allow camping in their communities. Instead, AB 518 creates an opportunity for interested local governments to opt-in and create their own regulations for LICAs in their jurisdiction using state language as the baseline. Moreover, an amendment to the bill requires that counties opting-into LICA permitting must require digital marketplaces to include any permit or registration numbers associated with the LICA on the online listing in an effort to support local enforcement efforts.

### Do counties have the capacity to manage a potential increase in enforcement issues?



Assembly Bill 518 includes an opt-in clause clarifying that counties may adopt their own LICA-related legislation if they so choose. Those counties will then be responsible for enforcement of LICAs in their jurisdiction. However, in 2024 HCD confirmed that they have received just two complaints regarding LICAs in the last six years – any other complaints regarding noise, neighbor issues, etc. are already handled by local code enforcement agencies and will continue to be handled by them. Nevertheless, an amendment to the bill that requires digital marketplaces to provide a spot on listing pages for local permit or registration numbers from county governments should assist with enforcement as well.

### **Does AB 518 have any impact on Transient Occupancy Taxes at the local level?**

No. AB 518 does not impact how a local government wants to collect tourism taxes. In fact, AB 518 makes it much easier for local governments to update land use codes to allow for LICA-style camping and therefore require and collect taxes on this new and expanding land use.

### **Low-impact camping is compatible with responsible fire management:**

California's Joint Strategy for Sustainable Outdoor Recreation and Wildfire Resilience makes it clear that the state cannot afford to halt outdoor recreation in the face of a changing climate and longer fire season. Instead, the strategy recommends diversifying recreation opportunities to ensure families can continue to get outside while supporting rural economies. Camping on private land is a fire-safe activity and no more risky than short-term rental guests or a residential property owner having access to a backyard bbq or fire pit. In a public comment in June 2024, Ken Pimlott, former director of CAL FIRE, stated "fire safety requirements on private lands do not need to be unique or prohibitive to ensure that safety is the end result."

According to the National Fire Protection Association, campfires are one of the least common ignition sources of wildfires in the U.S. Hipcamp, the largest booking platform for camping globally, also reports that between 2014-2024 their campers spent 1.7 million nights outside in California without ever seeing a guest campfire cause a fire emergency.

### **Should RVs be allowed to stay at low-impact camping areas?**

Yes. RV usage is rapidly increasing, particularly among families, first-time campers, communities of color, and retirees. According to the 2024 KOA report, 33% of new campers chose glamping—including RV stays—while tent use continues to decline nationwide. RVs provide a safe, self-contained, and low-impact entry point to nature for a broad and diverse range of Californians.

Similarly, for landowners, hosting RVs requires minimal infrastructure investment, making it an accessible way for farmers, ranchers, and rural landowners to generate supplemental income to conserve their properties and agricultural operations.

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**Supporter List:** The following organizations have formally endorsed Assembly Bill 518

#### **Conservation and recreation advocates:**

- Audubon California
- Bay Area Ridge Trail Council
- California Parks and Recreation Society
- California Trails Foundation
- Great Redwood Trail Agency
- The Mammoth Lakes Trails & Public Access Foundation

- San Diego Mountain Biking Association
- Save the Redwoods League
- Trust for Public Land

#### **Outdoor equity and access:**

- Black Surfers Collective
- City Surf Project
- Latino Outdoors
- Outdoor Afro
- Outdoor Outreach
- Salted Roots

#### **Outdoor industry and retailers:**

- Big Agnes, Inc.
- California Outdoor Recreation Partnership
- Coloma Lotus Whitewater
- Outdoor Industry Association
- Hipcamp, Inc.
- Little Kamper LP
- Marmot
- NEMO Equipment, Inc
- Pathloom, Inc.
- REI Co-op
- Ramble
- Salewa
- Top Rope Media

- Tahoe Mountain Sports
- VF Corporation

#### **Agriculture and rural economies:**

- Apple Hill Growers Association
- California Association for Local Economic Development
- California Farm Bureau Federation
- California Certified Organic Farmers
- Community Alliance with Family Farmers
- El Dorado County Farm Bureau
- El Dorado County Farm Trails
- El Dorado County Chamber of Commerce
- Visit San Benito County

#### **Local governments:**

- Inyo County Board of Supervisors
- Mendocino County Board of Supervisors
- Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
- San Benito County Board of Supervisors
- Hardy Bullock, Fifth District Supervisor, Nevada County
- John Peschong, First District Supervisor, San Luis Obispo County
- Anaiah Kirk, Third District Supervisor, Tuolumne County