

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

County should deal with Airbnb

I've noticed a peculiar double standard in Volusia County government regarding taxes. On the one hand, the county is eager to collect more tax, to the extent of holding a special election to approve a half-cent sales tax increase. On the other hand, they refuse to accept tax payments offered them directly from Airbnb.

In Florida, 40 counties that have a tourist development tax accept automated remittance of this tax from Airbnb. Last year, Airbnb hosts in Volusia County earned \$14.6 million, which generated about \$876K in tax revenue. Automated

remittance ensures that the full amount is collected, but instead of embracing this convenience, Volusia County demands that hosts remit it themselves.

This honor system is not only inefficient, but also potentially ineffective. In my opinion, that is why the county recently sent notices to non-homesteaded property owners (whether they rent their property or not) threatening fines or imprisonment if the tax is not paid.

I understand the county objects to Airbnb's policy of submitting a lump-sum remittance, without detailing the individual hosts on whose

behalf the tax is remitted. Yet 40 other counties operate under this constraint. The state receives sales tax from Airbnb with this constraint. Counties and states across the country accept this constraint. Yet, Volusia County stubbornly insists it's their way or no way.

It doesn't matter whether someone supports or opposes vacation rentals, automated remittance of the tourist development tax is something we should all support. Otherwise, we are enabling the county's nonsensical behavior.

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