

The Idaho Playbook

How Idaho's Vacation Rental Operators
Organized, Advocated, and Passed HB 583

Online version and updates: <https://idahovra.org/playbook>

In March 2026, Idaho passed House Bill 583 — one of the strongest short-term rental preemption laws in the country. It took three legislative sessions, a statewide association built from fragmented regional groups, and a small number of operators who chose to absorb the cost.

This playbook is what we would hand ourselves three years ago. It is not a motivational document. It is the sequence, the tactics, and the decisions — built from mistakes and hard lessons — so operators in other states can start from where we finished.

Prepared by the Idaho Vacation Rental Association. Presented at VRMA 26 Nashville, October 5, 2026.

SECTION 1

The Three-Year Arc

Year 1: Consolidation and the laundry-list bill. Regional groups came together. A legislator who owned a short-term rental drafted a comprehensive bill. It was too much, too fast, with no relationships behind it. It did not pass. It did show the legislature we were willing to come to the table.

Year 2: Listening. We met with legislators who voted no and asked why. We learned they were operating on complaints they'd heard, not data. Several told us the bill compromised too much. We started building the data set.

Year 3: Presence, data, and a pared-down bill. Operators relocated to Boise for the session. A lobbyist opened doors; we walked through them. The bill was shorter, clearer, and built on one principle: short-term rentals should not be treated differently from any other residential use.

Honest expectation: three years. Anything shorter is unusual. Say it plainly so your people don't quit in year one.

Consolidate First

You cannot get a bill sponsor as five fragmented groups. Legislators need to see a statewide pattern, not a local grievance.

- Identify every regional group, Facebook community, and informal alliance in your state
- Bring them under one statewide association with a board, bylaws, and a single voice
- Collect stories from every region. The pattern is the argument.
- Expect friction. People who have been fighting alone do not immediately trust a new structure. Build it anyway.

SECTION 3

Build the Data

Legislators hear complaints from constituents. You are one voice against many. Data is how you win that argument.

What moved people in Idaho:

- Public records requests (FOIA) for emergency call volume by jurisdiction, with the share attributable to short-term rentals. We filed twice — the first year, the jurisdiction wasn't tracking it. The second year, the numbers undercut the complaint narrative.
- Ownership data showing the share of STRs owned by in-state, single-property owners. This dispelled the “out-of-state investor” and “corporate buyout” myths.
- Statewide inventory counts and share of total housing stock
- Tourism and tax contribution figures from the state tourism office

You do not need a research budget. Most of this is scrappiness: filing the request, asking a data partner, and putting it on a legislator's desk.

Sample public records request language:

Under [your state's public records act], I request records of all calls for service received by [agency] from [date] to [date], including the address, nature of call, and disposition, so that calls originating at short-term rental properties can be identified.

SECTION 4

Build the Relationships

There is no substitute. Relationships are built off-session, when legislators have time, not when your bill is on the floor.

- Build a spreadsheet of every legislator: district, committee assignments, voting record, and who on your team knows them
- Follow them on social media. Show up to their events. Make small personal campaign donations so your name appears on their reports.
- Set appointments. Do not grab legislators in hallways. Respect their time and you get their attention.
- Be kind, be present, be factual. Let them see you as a person who cares about the state, not just a business.
- Listen to their concerns. Go get the data that answers them. Come back.
- Not everyone will move. When someone is a hard no, thank them and spend your time elsewhere. You do not need 100%.

SECTION 5

Find Your Sponsor, Then Co-Sponsors

- Ask your membership: who has a relationship with a legislator who will listen?
- Look for a legislator who is well liked by colleagues and who understands the issue personally
- Get buy-in, not a favor. They need to believe in it.
- Build the co-sponsor list by asking, one legislator at a time. Find the person on your team who is not afraid of hearing no.
- The co-sponsor list builds momentum. Legislators see who is already on and want to join.
- Keep a running tally. Know where you stand before the vote.

SECTION 6

Don't Outsource It

A lobbyist opens doors. You still have to walk through them and tell your own story.

- We asked our lobbyist for one thing: get us in front of the right people. Not “pass our bill.”
- Operators showed up. Six weeks in Boise for some. Multiple weeks for others. Hosts drove hours to be there.
- Capitol Day: we set meetings with legislators and brought hosts and owners from their own districts to tell their stories. We handed our relationships to our community.
- The positivity rule: we asked hosts to leave grievances at home and lead with what short-term rentals made possible — college tuition, first-generation homeownership, a place for wildfire evacuees.
- Money is not the lever. The real cost was opportunity cost from a small number of people who chose to absorb it.

SECTION 7

Decide Your Red Lines Before Session

Before the session, our board ratified a written framework. We shared it with every coalition partner and with legislators. When the pressure came, it was already settled.

IVRA Core Principles (as ratified by the board):

1. Short-term rentals are a lawful residential use and are protected by fundamental property rights.
2. Any regulation should target behavior, not use.
3. Most community impacts attributed to STRs are already addressed through existing local authority — noise, trash, parking, disorderly conduct, public safety.
4. These laws should be enforced consistently across all residential uses, not through STR-specific regulatory schemes.
5. IVRA supports common-sense health and safety standards when they are objective, equally applied to all residential uses, and not a pretext to suppress lawful use.
6. Any regulation that explicitly or implicitly enables prohibition or material inhibition of lawful STR use is unacceptable.

IVRA Red Lines (we withdraw support if a bill or amendment does any of these):

1. Enables explicit or implicit prohibition of STR use
2. Introduces discretionary licensing, permitting, or approval schemes
3. Allows local governments to cap, restrict, or phase out STRs through indirect mechanisms
4. Applies use-specific restrictions to STRs not applied to other residential uses
5. Creates frameworks whose practical effect is suppression, even if labeled “health and safety”

A lot changed between the first draft and the final bill. Nothing on this list was crossed. We refined language. We did not trade principles.

SECTION 8

Coalition Without Capture

Partners contributed. Operators led.

- Our coalition included the state Realtors association, booking platforms, and VRMA
- Each partner had its own lobbyist and its own interests
- We framed the issue as property rights, not an industry ask. That gave every partner a reason to be in the room.
- We shared our ratified principles with every partner up front. They knew our lines before negotiation started.
- This was not a platform's bill. We did not answer to anyone but our members.

- Is property rights the right frame for your state? That is yours to decide. Understand your legislature before you choose.

SECTION 9

After It Passes

Passing the bill is not the finish line.

- Opposition will test the edges. Expect attempts to work around the law at the local level.
- IVRA sent a toolkit to every municipality in Idaho inviting direct discussion
- We are compiling remaining local rules — parking, nuisance, noise — into a centralized database so operators and investors can look them up
- We encourage cities to publish their STR guidance online and link to the state statute. Most had nothing.
- Operators hold each other accountable. Reach out to absent owners when a property is a problem. Scrutiny is higher now, not lower.
- A single operator cannot open channels with cities. A state association can.

SECTION 10

Step One

If you are reading this from a state with no association and no bill, here is the next 30 days:

- Find every regional STR group in your state and make a list
- Call three of their leaders. Propose one statewide organization.
- Identify one legislator who owns or has stayed in a short-term rental
- File one public records request for emergency call data in your most hostile jurisdiction
- Write down what you will not negotiate. Ratify it with whoever is leading this with you.
- Put a date on the calendar for your first Capitol visit — during the off-session

Don't chase money. Chase data and relationships. Expect three years. Start now.

HB 583 at a glance

- Passed the Idaho House 54–16 on February 12, 2026
- Passed the Idaho Senate 23–12 on March 9, 2026
- Signed by the Governor March 16, 2026
- Session Law Chapter 22. Effective July 1, 2026.

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