

San Francisco voters reject anti-Airbnb measure

November 4 2015

San Francisco voters on Tuesday rejected a measure that would have limited short-term housing rentals in their city in what was seen as a referendum on surging startup Airbnb.

Voters rejected "Proposition F" 55 percent against 45 percent, according to results posted by the San Francisco Department of Elections.

The measure would have placed a 75-day limit per year for rentals under 30 days, regardless of whether the property is "hosted" or not—a significant change in the current law which allows 90 days if the resident is absent, and places no limits on renting a "hosted" spare room.

Airbnb, a San Francisco-based online service allowing property dwellers and owners to rent out a room or entire home for short periods, would have been heavily affected if the law passed.

Housing prices have been surging in recent years in the region around San Francisco and nearby Silicon Valley due to investment in tech startups.

Some former low-income San Francisco neighborhoods have been transformed by the arrival of highly paid tech workers.

According to the real estate website Zillow, the average San Francisco rent in September was \$4,390 per month, compared with less than \$3,000 five years ago and an average nationwide of \$1,386.

Airbnb critics claim that the service unfairly competes with hotels, which face stricter regulations and taxes.

Airbnb has been a major contributor to the "no" campaign, which raised \$8 million compared with just \$800,000 for the backers, according figures released by the San Francisco Ethics Commission.

Airbnb, launched in 2008, operates in some 34,000 cities around the world and has some 40 million users worldwide.

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