

NATIONAL TENANTS BILL OF RIGHTS

SECTION SUMMARIES

The National Tenants Bill of Rights sets out seven essential rights that establish a baseline of tenant protections in the rental housing market. These rights follow a tenant's experience applying for housing, signing a lease, and living in their home.

THE NATIONAL TENANTS BILL OF RIGHTS INCLUDES:

- 1. THE RIGHT TO A FAIR APPLICATION** - Discriminatory screening practices by landlords and tenant screening companies prevent prospective tenants from being fairly considered when they apply for housing. To ensure fair opportunity for all, landlords should only consider information relevant to an applicant's ability to perform their obligations as a tenant.
- 2. THE RIGHT TO A FAIR LEASE** - Leases shape the legal relationship between landlords and tenants, often reflecting their imbalance of power. To correct this imbalance, leases should clearly define the duties and rights of both landlords and tenants and avoid predatory and deceptive terms.
- 3. THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM FROM DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT** - Home should be a sanctuary for tenants. Currently, tenants are vulnerable to discrimination, violations of privacy, and harassment by their landlords. To ensure a basic level of privacy and quiet enjoyment, tenants should have the tools to prevent this behavior. Tenants also need the federal government to robustly enforce federal anti-discrimination laws to prevent landlord abuses.
- 4. THE RIGHT TO A HABITABLE HOME** - Tenants deserve to feel safe in their homes. Safe homes include working appliances and fixtures, reliable utilities, effective pest control, and prevention from deadly health hazards. When something is in need of repair, tenants should have a clear way to communicate their concerns to a landlord and the landlord should be obligated to fix habitability concerns promptly.

- 5. THE RIGHT TO REASONABLE RENT AND COSTS** - Rent is often the largest expense in a household's budget, and financial stability is largely absent in a system where landlords hike rents dramatically higher and at a faster rate than the growth of wages. To protect tenants from financial shocks that put them at risk of eviction and further harm, safeguards are necessary to prevent rent gouging and excessive or hidden fees. Landlords should be limited to reasonable rent increases, and they should only be allowed to assess fees that have been clearly disclosed in the lease.

- 6. THE RIGHT TO ORGANIZE** - To correct the power imbalance between tenants and landlords, tenants must have the ability to organize without fear of retaliation or eviction from landlords, owners, and management.

- 7. THE RIGHT TO SAFEGUARDS AGAINST EVICTIONS** - Tenants should not have to risk losing their homes in eviction court in a manner of minutes. Tenants deserve a basic level of due process in eviction proceedings and have protections from illegal evictions and evictions without good cause.

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