

2013 LEGISLATIVE UPDATE: Oregon Legislature now in full swing

Landlord-Tenant Coalition

As most of you know by now, the Oregon Legislative Session opened on January 14th and is now in full swing. The Landlord-Tenant Coalition held what should be its last meeting on February 28th in a final attempt to move a Coalition bill forward.

As you'll recall from our last legislative update article, landlord and tenant advocates were able to reach agreement at the January 22nd Coalition meeting on non-compliance fees, renters' insurance, restricting the use of evictions and criminal offenses in screening, and some minor housekeeping issues. Unfortunately, negotiations broke down at that point over the issue of guests. Metro Multifamily Housing felt so strongly about this issue that it threatened to derail the entire Coalition bill.

Since that time, the Coalition has continued negotiations and at our February 28th meeting, we were able to reach agreement to move a Coalition bill forward in the Legislature. The final bill will include non-compliance fees, renters' insurance, restricting the use of evictions and criminal offenses in screening, and some minor housekeeping issues with no significant changes in those items from the description in our last legislative update. In order to move the bill forward, Metro Multifamily Housing agreed to drop the issue of guests (for consideration at a later date) and tenant advocates agreed to drop one housekeeping provision that would have required landlords to change locks between tenants.

Stay tuned for updates as the Coalition bill moves through the Legislature. State of Oregon's official webpage also has a wealth of information on their Legislature's website. Just log-on to www.oregon.gov and click on the "Legislature" link. From there, the link "Contact information and answers to frequently asked questions" is especially informative. On both pages, you'll find facts about the makeup of the Legislature, a calendar of events, a district map, how to find and/or write your legislator, and even a kids' page.

"Housing Choice Act of 2013" – The Section 8 Bill

House Speaker Tina Kotek continues to move the Housing Choice Act of 2013 (otherwise known as "the Section 8 bill") through the Legislature. I had the opportunity to speak about this bill at the annual meeting of Oregon Housing Authorities this month, and I will testify to the Legislature on behalf of Oregon Rental Housing Association on March 6th. ORHA does not support this bill, and we continue our efforts to ensure that landlords' needs and rights are protected in the event that this bill does have support in the Legislature. In ORHA testimony, our demands will include, among others, a sunset clause if the bill does pass, a mitigation fund without a cap on the amount of landlord recovery, and the creation of an oversight committee for the program that would include landlord representatives, Housing Authority officials, and government officials. Look for future updates as this bill moves through Legislative committee.