

Landlord Tenant Coalition Meetings Continue in Anticipation of the 2013 Oregon Legislative Session

Our fourth Landlord Tenant Coalition meeting was held on August 7th in anticipation of the upcoming Oregon Legislative Session which begins January 14th. Again in attendance were representatives of Lane County Legal Aid, Community Alliance of Tenants, Rental Housing Association of Greater Portland, City of Corvallis, Oregon Rental Housing Association, Legal Aid Services of Oregon, Oregon Law Center, Metro Multifamily Housing Association, and a few private parties. Our work to compile a Landlord-Tenant Omnibus Bill continues.

This month's coalition meeting was made up in large part of fact-finding and research about the best way to move coalition members' proposals forward. We first discussed whether it was feasible to purge from the court record those FED's/evictions which are either dismissed or won by the tenant or, at the very least, recode the way this information is processed so that it is more clear to landlords when they are reviewing the information to determine the approval of an application. (It is illegal to hold evictions against applicants if those evictions were either dismissed or won by the applicant, but landlords are not always clear about the outcome of a case and sometimes use the fact that an eviction had simply been filed as a reason to deny an application.) According to a regional expert in the field, it appears at least possible to move this proposal forward and so we will revisit the ways to do so at our next meeting.

We next discussed the proposal that landlord tenant law clarify that landlords may require, as a condition of the rental agreement, tenants to purchase rental insurance and that the requirement would not be considered a fee under landlord tenant law. Much discussion led us to the conclusion that the expertise of an insurance expert would help us in our considerations, and we are arranging to consult with an insurance expert at our next meeting.

Finally, I introduced, on behalf of the Oregon Rental Housing Association, the proposition that the amount of time in which a landlord may file a case against a prior tenant for outstanding monies owed be extended from one year to five years. We believe this change is necessary to give landlords more time to locate and serve court papers to prior tenants who are trying to evade this process. The coalition ran out of time to consider this proposal further, and we will take up this proposal at our next meeting.

As always, I welcome our members' comments and concerns about this legislative process. Please contact your local organization's legislative representative to voice your thoughts. The 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.