

2017 Oregon Legislature – ORHA Legislative Update

By Jim Straub, ORHA Legislative Director

The 2017 Oregon Legislative Session begins on February 1, 2017. I became aware in May, 2016, that tenant advocates would most likely focus on a single issue for legislative change rather than the usual multiple issues over which landlord and tenant advocates attempted to reach compromise or agreed to table for another legislative session. That single issue is the elimination of No Cause Notices to Vacate. Tenant advocates' insistence on a single issue with zero room for compromise made myself and other landlord leaders realize we were going to have a difficult fight this next legislative session. Although I had hoped to continue to meet with tenant advocates in our Landlord-Tenant Coalition as in years past, tenant advocates refused to provide any room for discussion of compromise and, as such, tenant advocates elected not to participate in a Landlord-Tenant Coalition group for the 2017 Legislative Session.

Since May, landlord organizations in Oregon, realizing that we will have a substantial fight looming, decided to unite our strength into a single concentrated landlord group effort, which now includes the three largest landlord organizations in the state: ORHA (us), Multifamily NW, and the Rental Housing Alliance of Oregon. We have participated in regular meetings and devised an overall strategic plan, which we are now in the process of implementing. Details of this plan cannot be disclosed publically at this time, out of fear that our efforts will be compromised if the opposition has access to our road map. The details of our plan will be made clear as the legislative session progresses. Let me tell you this, though: in my 26 years as an Oregon landlord and my nearly seven years as ORHA Legislative Director, I have never seen a more closely aligned and powerful landlord effort utilizing all the resources available to us in the fight ahead.

Although the potential issues are daunting – the elimination of No Cause Notices of Termination, rent control, landlord funded tenant relocation – I have never felt more confident in our strategic positioning as landlords. Politics are politics, and you never know what will happen in Salem. Rest assured, though, that no matter what happens in the legislature, we will have left no stone unturned. If we fail in our efforts, it will not be because of a lack of effort of landlords or their highly competent leadership.

In years past, I have written regular updates to keep our members current on our efforts to reach compromise before and during legislative sessions. Because of the unique nature of the political issues this session, I will be purposefully silent at times to best position our efforts for success. I ask our members to remain patient and trust that your efforts will be needed. For now, I urge you to contribute to the Oregon Rental Housing Association PAC to move our fight

forward. You may contribute online at <http://oregonrentalhousingpac.org/>. If you've contributed before, please consider becoming a boosting member by contributing again.

In the coming months, we will be asking you to contact your state legislator by email, letters and telephone calls. Please wait to contact your legislator about these issues until we contact you with additional information. We will provide more direction about which issues to educate your legislator about and which to ask them to consider on behalf of Oregon landlords. These efforts will most likely be concentrated in late January/early February and stretch through June, 2017. We will contact our members via email, so please take the time now to be sure your local and state organizations have your current email address and add ORHA's email (office@oregonrentalhousing.com) to your email list to ensure our email to you doesn't end up in your junk mail folder.

We anticipate intense media coverage surrounding these issues. If the media contacts you, we ask members not to speak directly to individual media requests. Instead, please request the media to contact me, Jim Straub as your Legislative Director. I will be happy to speak to the media on ORHA's behalf, ensuring that our message stays unified and doesn't erode our carefully crafted political framework that we are now keeping in place. You may give any media inquirers my contact information at ld@oregonrha.com or 541-654-5588.

Thank you to all our members for your past and anticipated future efforts. It will take all of us working together to ensure the best interests of Oregon landlords are protected in this next legislative session.