



Winning a Tenant Rights Ballot Initiative

Tacoma for All is proposing a “Landlord Fairness Code” ballot initiative to make Tacoma a leader in solving the housing crisis.

Landlords in Tacoma and Pierce County evict tenants at a 56% higher rate than the rest of the state, and most evictions are due to inability to pay rent. Over the last five years, landlords also hiked rents by 43% in Pierce County. A majority of Tacoma tenants are “rent-burdened,” paying more than a third of their income on housing. Exceeding this threshold leads to spikes in rates of homelessness.

Robust tenant protections and rent stabilization are proven to reduce inequalities while improving outcomes in education, health, employment, and incarceration rates. Together we can win the same legal protections enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of renters across Washington and become a model for addressing the housing crisis.

What Will it Take to Win?

If we commit together to launch this ballot initiative campaign, we must build a powerful grassroots movement ready to take on the big landlords, developers, and real estate financiers whose profits have soared at the expense of working people. Organizing a broad labor and community coalition capable of uniting thousands of Tacomans into action will require:

- **Collecting 7,000 signatures by mid-June**
 - While only 4,200 valid signatures of registered Tacoma voters are needed, many will be thrown out. To be safe, we must collect thousands more.
- **Organizing 50+ volunteers by our March 4th Canvassing Kick-off**
 - We need 40 canvassing shifts per week, averaging 15 signatures per shift.
- **Raising \$100,000+ to hire staff and run a professional campaign**
 - Convincing the 24,000 voters we need to win in Nov will take real resources.
- **Building a broad Labor-Community Coalition**
 - The voices of trusted community leaders will be critical to answer the misinformation and fear-mongering of our opposition.

Landlord Fairness Code - Policy Outline

This “Landlord Fairness Code” ballot initiative would raise Tacoma up to the highest standards of tenant protections in the state.

- **Landlords must not charge unfair or excessive move-in fees or late fees**
 - Landlords may not charge non-refundable and refundable move in fees that, together, total more than one month’s rent
 - This includes security deposits, first/last month’s rent, application fees, and any fees charged for credit checks.
 - Landlords may not collect pet deposits greater than 25% of one month’s rent
 - Late fees are capped at \$10 a month; late fee accrual following the end of the lease is prohibited.

- **Landlords must give six months notice of rent increases and pay relocation assistance when rent increases require tenants to relocate.**
 - Landlords must provide a provide a notice of rent increase at 180 days and 90 days before the increase
 - Landlords must offer tenant release relocation assistance when they increase rent over 5 percent and the tenant decides to move out. Within 30 days of a tenant requesting relocation assistance, a landlord must pay them the following amounts:
 - 2 months of rent for rent increases over 5%
 - 2.5 months for rent increases over 7.5%
 - 3 months for rent increases over 10%
 - Rent increases in dwellings with habitability violations are prohibited

- **Landlords are prohibited from evicting children or educators during the school year, or carrying out other unjust evictions.**
 - Deadly cold-weather evictions from November - March are banned
 - Alongside existing protections, tenants cannot be evicted based on their status as a member of the military, first responder, senior, healthcare worker, family member, or educator

- **Penalties for violations and procedures to protect the rights of tenants are strengthened.**

Note: Some of these policies are still under consideration and certain details may change in the actual ballot initiative.