

Make Tenant Screening Reports Fair & Accurate for All Renters

Pass the Truth in Evictions Reporting Act

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The way evictions are currently reported just doesn't make any sense.

If a company is creating a tenant report about you, it should be accurate and should fairly represent your renter history. Currently, when a tenant is named in an eviction lawsuit, tenant screening companies merely state you were involved, and that's it—they don't have to explain the circumstances or the ruling outcome. The eviction could've been thrown out or the court could've ruled in favor of the tenant. But, none of this really matters because tenant reports list all eviction lawsuits as equal, even when the tenant wins. No matter the outcome, tenants have a mark on their record.

Many tenants are seen as "guilty," even when they're "innocent."

Even when eviction lawsuits are unfair, erroneous, or ruled in the renter's favor, the tenant is still stuck with the "Do Not Rent To" label. Thus, the concept of "innocent until proven guilty" doesn't apply to these tenants. Once companies mark your record, it will appear to all future landlords that you were guilty, even if you proved yourself innocent in court. Many good renters have their names blacklisted by tenant screening reports simply because a landlord filed a suit against them. Outcomes where the tenant won or where the case was thrown out shouldn't limit a tenant's ability to find housing in the future.

Even If Tenants Win, They Lose

Approximately one-third of all unlawful detainer (a.k.a. eviction) filings in Washington do not result in a writ of restitution—the legal document empowering law enforcement to evict a tenant. Yet, these filings are included on tenants' screening reports and are then used as grounds to deny housing.

A Scarlet Letter

When a tenant has an eviction record, it amounts to a Scarlet Letter because no matter the outcomes or circumstances, tenants are branded as a problem and many landlords refuse to even consider renting to a tenant with an eviction. This "Scarlet Eviction Letter" will remain on tenants' screening reports and complicate their access to future housing.

What is the legislative ask?

Pass the Truth in Evictions Reporting Act to make the tenant screening process more affordable and fair for both tenants and landlords.

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WHEN WINNING IS LOSING

Why We Need to Reform Tenant Screening Practices

The U.S. justice system guarantees that every American will be considered innocent until proven guilty. Yet when a landlord files an eviction lawsuit against a renter, that renter's record is blemished — no matter the suit's outcome. Learn how improving tenant screening report standards will protect the basic rights of Washington renters.

THE LIFETIME OF AN EVICTION FILING

When an eviction a.k.a. "unlawful detainer" is filed with the courts, it begins as an unsubstantiated allegation. The lawsuit can have many outcomes. But if the case is dismissed, the eviction ends as an unsubstantiated allegation. The process also creates a paper trail. Tenant screening reports typically list the existence of this paper trail to landlords without any context or even any information on the ruling. This paper trail alone becomes a "Scarlet Letter" that a tenant carries with them even when they have won.

BUT ALL THIS IS REPORTED AS

