

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5678

---

---

As of February 14, 2025

**Title:** An act relating to preparing for revisions to the residential landlord-tenant act by creating a task force and establishing a moratorium on new residential landlord-tenant regulations.

**Brief Description:** Preparing for revisions to the residential landlord-tenant act by creating a task force and establishing a moratorium on new residential landlord-tenant regulations.

**Sponsors:** Senators Dozier, Braun and Wilson, J..

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Housing: 2/14/25.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Creates a task force to study and make recommendations regarding potential updates to the Residential Landlord-Tenant Act and report its findings and recommendations to Legislature by July 1, 2027.
- Prohibits counties, cities, code cities, and towns from enacting or creating new ordinances, development regulations, zoning regulations, official controls, policies or administrative practices that regulates the residential landlord-tenant relationship for 36-months.

---

### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING

**Staff:** Bill Fosbre (786-7531)

**Background:** The Residential Landlord-Tenant Act (RLTA) governs the legal duties, rights, and remedies related to any rental agreement between a landlord and a tenant for a residential dwelling unit.

No county, city or town of any class may enact, maintain, or enforce ordinances or other

---

*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

provisions which regulate the amount of rent to be charged for single-family or multiple-unit residential rental structures or sites other than properties in public ownership, under public management, or properties providing low-income rental housing under joint public-private agreements for the financing or provision of such low-income rental housing.

Local governments are not preempted from requiring relocation assistance to tenants displaced by a landlord's failure to remedy building code or health code violations.

Tenants who terminate a rental agreement because the tenant or a household member was a victim of a crime of domestic violence, sexual assault, unlawful harassment, or stalking, and has either protection order or has notified a qualified third party acting in their official capacity is not limited to the remedies under RLTA.

**Summary of Bill:** A task force is created to study and review the RLTA and report its findings and recommendations to Legislature by July 1, 2027. The Department of Commerce (Commerce) must provide staff support for the task force. The task force must choose its chair or cochairs from among its membership. The legislative members of the task force must convene the initial meeting.

The members of the task force shall be made up of:

- one member from each of the two largest caucuses of the Senate appointed by the President of the Senate; and
- one member from each of the two largest caucuses of the House of Representatives appointed by Speaker of the House of Representatives.
- one representative of the for-profit residential property management and operations industry specializing in management of residential properties with 20 or more rental units;
- two representatives of the residential property management and operations industry specializing in management of residential properties with between one and four rental units, with one representative from east of the crest of the Cascade Mountains and one representative from west of the crest of the Cascade Mountains;
- one representative of the nonprofit residential property management and operations industry;
- one representative of the real estate sales profession;
- one representative of the for-profit housing development industry;
- one representative of the nonprofit housing development industry;
- one representative of a statewide Tenant Legal Aid Association;
- one representative from a tenant-based organization representing historically underserved populations;
- one representative of public housing authorities;
- two representatives of the Association of Washington Cities, with one representative from a city that is located east of the crest of the Cascade Mountains and one representative from a city that is located west of the crest of the Cascade Mountains;
- one representative from the Superior Court Judges' Association; and

- the director of the Commerce or the director's designee.

The task shall make recommendations regarding potential updates to following issue areas:

- rent increase limits and rent stabilization policies;
- security deposits and fees;
- court processes related to the RLTA, including the eviction process;
- required notices;
- just cause eviction;
- lease compliance;
- a rental registry;
- local control;
- access to rental assistance;
- liability for violations of the RLTA;
- tenant screening and access to rental housing; and
- any other issues that the task force deems relevant.

Counties, cities, code cities, and towns may not enact or create new ordinances, development regulations, zoning regulations, official controls, policies or administrative practices that regulates the residential landlord-tenant relationship for 36-months following the effective date.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on February 6, 2025.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** Yes.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: By establishing a task force to review and refine the RLTA, this bill promotes collaboration amongst a diverse group of stakeholders, ensuring that all perspectives are considered in creating policies.

The 36-month moratorium on local landlord-tenant regulations will help prevent inconsistencies across the state, fostering a more predictable and streamlined rental market. Particularly appreciative of the bill's focus on tenant assistance programs, eviction reforms, and increasing the availability of rental housing, which is crucial for creating long-term housing stability.

This evidence-based approach will lead to practical, data-driven policy solutions that benefit both residents and housing providers.

We believe that we create the best housing policy when we bring everyone to the table.

Tenants, housing providers, developers, and community leaders ensure that homes are affordable, it's handleable and accessible for everyone in our community. This bill creates a balanced and thoughtful task force to evaluate our housing laws and provide real solutions.

The bill that aims to modernize Washington's RLTA and a thoughtful data-driven manner while imposing a temporary moratorium on new regulations.

CON: Oppose the three-year moratorium on local regulations of landlord tenant relationships. Local regulations allow cities and counties to respond to the needs in their communities and provide protections that the RLTA does not. Local ordinances can provide health and safety protections that the RLTA does not.

Local ordinance can give renters a clearer path to enforce their rights when they're facing habitability issues or retaliation. They can ease the financial burden of the move-in process to keep people from falling into homelessness between tendencies. Putting a three-year moratorium on the ability of local jurisdictions to regulate tendencies arbitrarily prevents them from managing the particular impacts of the rental markets within their borders. There are concerns about this statewide approach.

The needs of Seattle and King County are unique. They are not the same as what is here in Tumwater or Olympia. Urban areas are different than other parts of the state. Seattle and King County needs to be able to make rules and laws that work for them.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Perry Dozier, Prime Sponsor; Carter Nelson, Washington Multifamily Housing Association; Alex Harrington , NAIOP Washington State; Daniel Klemme, Rental Housing Association of Washington; GORDON HAGGERTY; Bruce Becker.

CON: Michele Thomas, Washington Low Income Housing Alliance; Sarah Nagy, Columbia Legal Services; Sarah Moore; Kerri Burnside, Bellingham Tenants Union; Josie Tracy, Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility; Melanie Smith, Seattle / King County Coalition on Homelessness; Ishbel Dickens, Assoc of Manufactured Home Owners.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** No one.