
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 5258

AN ACT CONCERNING TENANT ORGANIZATIONAL ACTIVITIES.

SUMMARY

The bill requires residential rental property owners to allow certain on-site tenant organization and tenant organizing activities. The bill extends, with limitations, current law's protections against certain retaliatory actions by landlords to cover tenants engaging in these protected activities.

The bill applies to property owners subject to the state's landlord tenant laws and their agents. (Under existing law and the bill, certain rental arrangements are not covered by these laws, including dormitories, transient lodgings, and nursing homes.) The bill generally requires these covered owners and agents ("landlords") to let tenant organizers and tenants and their agents engage in on-site activities related to establishing or operating a tenant organization, if they are done in a reasonable manner and conform with any applicable law. Under the bill, these activities include helping tenants participate in tenant organization activities, distributing leaflets, contacting tenants to share information on their legal rights, and holding meetings in common areas (see below).

Under the bill, a "tenant organization" is established by tenants that share the same landlord to address issues related to their living environment (including terms and conditions of tenancy and activities related to housing and community development). A tenant organization must meet regularly and operate independently from the landlord and their agents. (While some local ordinances specify a process for recognizing duly organized tenant organizations, state law does not require tenants to follow a specific process.)

Under federal regulations, similar but more comprehensive

requirements apply to owners of certain federally supported multifamily properties, including certain properties supported by project-based Section 8 and the Section 202 supportive housing programs.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

PROTECTED TENANT ACTIVITIES

The bill identifies activities that landlords must allow tenant organizers and tenants and their agents to conduct related to establishing or operating a tenant organization. Under the bill, a “tenant organizer” is someone who (1) helps tenants establish and operate a tenant organization and (2) is not an employee or agent of a current or prospective landlord or their managers.

The covered protected activities are:

1. distributing leaflets in lobby and common areas, at or under tenants’ doors, and posting information on bulletin boards;
2. initiating contact with tenants, conducting door-to-door surveys to determine interest in establishing a tenant organization and offer information about tenant organizations or the legal rights of tenants;
3. helping tenants participate in tenant organization activities;
4. convening meetings and certain other events on-site, as described below; and
5. performing other reasonable and lawful activities related to establishing or operating a tenant organization.

The bill prohibits landlords from requiring prior permission before these activities, although a generally applicable rule on reserving community or recreation rooms in advance may still apply. If a landlord has generally applicable rules allowing tenants to post information on bulletin boards or other displays in common areas, these rules cannot specifically prohibit posting information related to tenant organizing

activities.

Under the bill, a tenant organizer must be accompanied by a tenant while conducting the above activities on a landlord's property.

On-Site Meetings

Regarding on-site meetings and events, the bill specifies that if they relate to establishing or operating a tenant organization and are conducted in a reasonable and orderly manner, at a reasonable time, and without violating any laws (like those on fire safety), these events:

1. must be allowed without the landlord's presence;
2. may include meetings, political caucuses, and forums for speeches of public officials or candidates for public office; and
3. may occur in (a) any community room or recreation room, if these rooms are generally open to tenants, or (b) in common areas like laundry rooms, hallways, and lobbies, if a community or recreation room is not available.

PROHIBITION ON RETALIATORY EVICTION OR DECREASE IN SERVICES

Current law prohibits landlords from taking certain retaliatory actions against tenants (see BACKGROUND). Under this law, among other things and with some exceptions, a landlord cannot maintain an eviction proceeding, increase rent, or decrease services for six months after a "tenant has organized" or "become of member of a tenants' union." The bill modifies this prohibition and adds additional protections related to the tenant activities described above.

The bill retains current law's prohibition on retaliation for having organized or joining a tenants' union. But it specifies that the organizing activities it newly protects (e.g., distributing leaflets or holding meetings about forming a tenants' organization) are subject to a narrower prohibition on retaliation. Under the bill, landlords cannot maintain an eviction proceeding or decrease services for four months after the tenant participates in an activity the bill newly protects. This prohibition is (1)

enforceable in the same way as the existing landlord retaliation law and (2) subject to the same exceptions.

BACKGROUND

Prohibited Retaliatory Actions

A landlord cannot maintain an eviction proceeding, increase rent, or decrease services for six months after a tenant takes certain actions, including (1) joining a tenants' union or (2) making a good faith attempt to bring the dwelling into compliance with state or local laws and regulations (CGS § 47a-20). The law establishes certain exceptions, such as cases where the tenant does not pay rent or is using the dwelling unit for an illegal purpose (CGS § 47a-20a).

Among other means of enforcement, fair rent commissions may enforce these provisions by imposing fines (CGS §§ 7-148b & 7-148f).

COMMITTEE ACTION

Housing Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 12 Nay 6 (03/05/2026)