

Eviction Moratorium

2021 Legislative Agenda

House Bill: H 5309

Sponsored by Representatives Diaz, Slater, Perez, Giraldo, Felix, Fellela, Tobon, Kazarian, Batista

Senate Bill: S 183

Sponsored by Senators Euer, Ruggerio, McCaffrey, Goodwin, Cano, Mack, Kallman, Lombardo, Valverde, DiMario

Legislative Explanation

This legislation imposes a moratorium on non-essential evictions/mortgage foreclosures during a state of emergency declared by the governor relating to residential property and establishes an eviction diversion program to resolve landlord-tenant eviction disputes.

Issue Background

The Rhode Island Association of REALTORS® (RIAR) represents more than 6,000 residential and commercial practitioners involved in all facets of the industry as brokers, sales agents, property managers, appraisers and housing providers. As one of the largest professional trade associations in Rhode Island, RIAR advocates for policies that promote and protect a vibrant real estate market that fosters homeownership and investment opportunities.

During the 2021 legislative session, bills have been introduced that are concerning to our members and the health of Rhode Island's real estate industry. Specifically, [H 5309/S 183](#) would impose a moratorium on non-essential evictions during a state of emergency declared by the governor relating to residential property and establishes an eviction diversion program to resolve landlord-tenant eviction disputes.

RIAR has worked closely with Rhode Island's Congressional delegation and the National Association of REALTORS® in advocating meaningful and robust rental assistance for vulnerable Rhode Island households. Those efforts yielded \$200 million in rental assistance in the stimulus bill signed into law in December 2020. Moreover, new stimulus funds estimated at \$152 million for emergency rental assistance will sustain safe housing for tenants.

RIAR has communicated the following to the House of Representatives and the Senate:

- RIAR supports efforts to protect individuals and households that have been devastated by the pandemic; however, we question the timing of [H 5309/S 183](#).
- Any delay in making federal rent relief funds available will escalate the current housing crisis.
- The General Assembly did not consider an eviction moratorium during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.
- Most states have lifted their eviction moratoriums, as rental assistance has been made available to tenants and housing providers.
- RIAR advocates for allowing the Judiciary to continue to order mediation to assist in the resolution of landlord/tenant disputes and on matters of law.
- [H 5309/S 183](#) is an inconsistent framework for addressing housing during a declared emergency. Rhode Island would only create confusion in the real estate market around evictions.
- The General Assembly must take into consideration the economic impact as well as the public health need and while considering the available rental assistance.
- Most homeowners are not major corporations that own hundreds or thousands of residential units and dwellings. They are responsible for making on time mortgage payments.

Call your Representative and Senator.

RIAR continues to advocate in both the Governor's Office and the General Assembly for clear guidance regarding the rental relief program, and to make the process for accessing these funds efficient so that on time rents and mortgages are paid. Furthermore, RIAR continues advocating for the courts to be involved in handling disputes between tenants and landlords.

Contact your Representative and Senator to let them know that you do not support H 5309/S 183 and urge them to ensure no delays in getting rent relief funds into the hands of housing providers upon application to rent relief programs.