

**OPINION**

# Editorial: Like renters, Marin landlords deserve more support during pandemic

By **MARIN IJ EDITORIAL BOARD** |

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After six months of stay-home orders and thousands of Marin residents left jobless as a result, an extension of the ban on evictions from apartments makes sense.

Allowing people to be forced from their apartments at a time when people are being told to stay home makes no sense, both from perspectives of protecting public health and empathy for those struggling financially as a result of the pandemic.

Last week, Gov. Gavin Newsom signed legislation that extends protections from evictions to Feb. 1.

The state protections had been slated to expire Sept. 1. Marin's moratorium on evictions is slated to expire at the end of this month and the new state law bans cities and counties from extending local moratoriums.

Advocates for renters say those protections don't go far enough.

For instance, the state law doesn't protect tenants from being forced out if they fail to make some payment toward rent. For those who have lost their jobs due to pandemic-caused layoffs or from lockdown rules that sidelined their businesses or work, that exception leaves them vulnerable.

The dilemma is also real for their landlords, as well. Many have mortgage payments to make and they rely on those rents so they can write those checks.



To think that landlords don't have bills to pay is myopic and ignoring reality.

Public dollars that have been devoted to help households weather the pandemic should require that they be spent first on necessities such as food, keeping up with rents, utility bills and medical care.

Public helping hands extended to businesses have been offered to help them weather the financial storm of the pandemic. This helps to keep employees working, pay utilities, convert their businesses to lockdown rules and to cover their own lost income.

Under the new state law, unpaid rents will be converted to debt if delinquent renters submit declarations that their nonpayment is related to COVID-19 lockdown rules.

The new law says that those tenants who fail to pay at least 25% of their rent when it is due could be subject to eviction.

That might be a difficult hurdle for some households.

The Marin Organizing Committee, a local group that has devoted its political energy to homeless services and affordable housing, is calling on the county to do more.

It wants the supervisors to freeze rent increases and fees for late payment during the pandemic emergency.

There is no question that such help is geared toward helping households recover from the lockdown, which is just now slowly easing with the flattening of the spike in the spread of coronavirus.

It is a balancing act.

The state law also provides foreclosure protection for landlords of single-family rentals and those of four units or smaller who can document that their nonpayment is the result of the pandemic. It does not offer similar protection for owners of larger rental complexes.

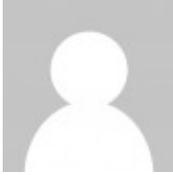
Lawmakers need to revisit this issue.

Landlords are providing the housing that is so important to public health measures that are showing progress and saving lives.

Passing laws to ban evictions without taking into consideration that landlords face similar financial stress is shortsighted.



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