



Nearly A Quarter Million Arizonans Could Be Evicted In January. Religious Leaders Want Ducey To Do Something About It

By Scott Bourque December 11, 2020

Earlier this year, the CDC imposed a nationwide eviction moratorium as pandemic-related unemployment put millions at risk of losing their homes. Those protections expire on Dec. 31, and currently, there are no state-level protections in Arizona. That could lead to a homelessness crisis in January.

The COVID-19 pandemic is as bad as it ever was in the United States — and economic indicators are poor too: job growth is slowing down and unemployment claims continue to rise. The National Council of State Housing Agencies estimates that between 170,000 and 250,000 renters would be at risk for eviction by the end of January. Nationwide, tenants owe an estimated \$180 million to landlords.

Thousands of Arizonans could lose their homes in January after the CDC's eviction moratorium expires at the end of the year. Rabbi John Linder with the Arizona Interfaith Network, along with leaders from the local Episcopal, Catholic and Presbyterian community, called on Gov. Ducey and the state's elected leaders to impose an eviction moratorium in Arizona.

"This is not just a public health issue, this is a moral issue," Linder said. "So we gather today as leaders of communities of faith to call on our elected officials to meet the gravity of the moment. If a vaccine can be created in record time, we can work collectively to keep the most vulnerable in their homes."

At the beginning of the year, there were about 7,500 people experiencing homelessness in Maricopa County, and public, private and faith-based homeless service resources were already strained. Reverend Jennifer Reddall, the Episcopal

bishop of Arizona and member of the **Valley Interfaith Project**, says the religious community is not equipped to handle a six-figure surge of newly homeless individuals. She led the Interfaith network's plea to Gov. Ducey to impose another eviction moratorium as the pandemic continues to tear through Arizona.

"We aren't set up to handle hundreds of thousands of homeless people, and we're definitely not set up to handle the downward effects," Reddall said. "If you evict a quarter million people, what are the effects on schools? What are the effects on people who are working and are evicted while working? What are the effects on healthcare? Those are not ours to solve, that is the job of the government, and that's why we're calling on our elected leaders to help us out now."

Linder said it's entirely within the governor's power to take proactive action to solve this crisis.

"It's not as though resources are not available," he said. "Resources are available, it's a matter of political will now. We're not going to be passive here. This is a crisis as every story has made clear."

As of Friday, the **Arizona Interfaith Network** had sent letters and requested meetings with Ducey and other elected leaders — but so far only county-level officials have responded.