

TULSA WORLD

Greg R. Taylor: Love your neighbor, don't evict him

By Greg R. Taylor - Oct 2, 2020 Updated Nov 9, 2020

The Tulsa Housing Authority and Restore Hope Ministries began offering rental assistance to tenants and landlords in Tulsa County on Aug. 24, thanks to Gov. Kevin Stitt and the Tulsa County Commission. But something is amiss.



Many tenants facing possible eviction still have not received rental assistance, despite the fact that \$20 million from CARES Act state and county funds are available. (Anna Codutti, Tulsa World)

Many tenants still have not received rental assistance, despite the fact that \$20 million from CARES Act state and county funds are available. Data show that 500,000 Oklahomans are behind on rent payments, and a recent survey of 75 property managers in the Tulsa area, representing 12,398 units, demonstrated an estimated \$13 million shortfall in rent payments by the end of September. The money is there. Why isn't it being used?

One possible reason is absentee ownership of property in Tulsa. When people don't see who they rent to, how can they care as much as those who rent to their neighbors?

Another reason may be the legal advice given to landlords by eviction attorneys. I was disturbed to learn from recent media coverage that some eviction attorneys are discouraging landlords from pointing their tenants toward this aid, saying it is not in their best interest.

As a fourth-generation builder, property manager and pastor, I call on local landlords to reach out to your tenants and offer to help them apply for the rental assistance.

My family and I are listening to stories tenants are telling us, praying for them, and thinking of ways to keep them in their homes rather than evict them. So, when I heard that CARES Act funds were available, I began advocating for tenants to apply for the aid.



In my work with ACTION, Allied Communities of Tulsa Inspiring Our Neighborhoods, I learned about a man named Karl who passed along information about the online application for rental assistance to his property manager.

After two weeks, the apartment manager sent an email to all tenants of the property with the application link. The manager even offered to help with the application process!

This is exemplary of what local landlords should be doing to help tenants who are struggling because of lost wages due to the pandemic. Citizens who own property, care about themselves and others and follow the golden rule help make for a good society where there is human flourishing, joy and peace.

Property managers and owners can help by directing tenants to the Tulsa County Rental Assistance Program. Tenants must live in Tulsa County, and they can go to <https://tulsahousing.nanmckay.com/> or can contact the Call Center at (918) 236-0949 to apply.

Evictions, homelessness and all the hardships that go along with those things are too much for people who are losing their jobs and bearing the stress of the pandemic.

What can you do to love your neighbor? I do everything I can to help people thrive and flourish on their own and with God's help. I try to live by the golden rule that nearly all religions agree to practice: Do to others as you would have them do to you. May God bless you, protect you, and help you protect those living in property you own.