

# Tulsa City Council asks Gov. Stitt to put most evictions in state on hold

[Michael Overall](#) Jun 11, 2020 Updated Aug 31, 2020



**Decter Wright.** Joey Johnson/*Tulsa World* file

Saying tenants need more time to collect unemployment checks and receive federal benefits, the Tulsa City Council voted unanimously Wednesday evening to ask for a statewide moratorium on most evictions.

The council passed a resolution calling for Gov. Kevin Stitt to temporarily block residential evictions unless a landlord is responding to a tenant's criminal behavior or dangerous activities.

"We're really just asking the governor to pay attention to Oklahomans who are really struggling right now" as a result of the COVID-19 shutdown, said City Councilor Lori Decter Wright, one of the sponsors of the resolution.

The push for a statewide eviction moratorium started with a Tulsa religious coalition known as ACTION and a similar group called VOICE in Oklahoma City, where the City Council has said it will vote on a similar resolution.

In effect until July 25, a federal moratorium already applies to rental properties that have federally backed mortgages, but the Tulsa City Council wants the same protection for tenants in all rental properties.

Landlords would benefit, as well, said Councilor Kara Joy McKee, explaining that tenants would ultimately still have to pay their rents in full but would have more time to seek employment or government assistance.

“Our tenants and landlords need this support at this time,” McKee said.

Since the COVID-19 shutdowns began in March, more than 2,500 eviction notices have been filed statewide, including more than 800 in Tulsa County, according to data from Open Justice Oklahoma.

That’s considerably fewer than normal, however, with Tulsa alone averaging more than 1,200 eviction cases a month in recent years, giving the city one of the highest eviction rates in the United States.

Tulsa’s eviction docket was on hold because of the pandemic and didn’t resume until June 1. Now tenant advocates expect to see a surge in the number of eviction filings.

Meanwhile, charitable donors are offering to pay overdue rents for more than 500 Tulsa families who are facing evictions.

Restore Hope Ministries will use an open-ended grant to pay rents for tenants who received eviction notices while the courts were closed for COVID-19. But landlords will have to agree to a mediation process while not refiling an eviction notice for at least the next three months, officials said.

Depending on how many tenants and landlords accept the offer, the money could reach into the hundreds of thousands of dollars, officials said.

Restore Hope’s efforts, however, won’t cover the rest of the state and won’t be able to help everyone who’s facing eviction even just in Tulsa, Councilor Wright said.