



Resources for Tenants

Legal Protections

- ATCP 135.09(5) reads, *“Retaliatory eviction. No landlord shall terminate a tenancy or give notice preventing the automatic renewal of a lease, or constructively evict a tenant by any means including the termination or substantial reduction of heat, water or electricity to the dwelling unit, in retaliation against a tenant because the tenant has:*
 - (a) Reported a violation of this chapter or a building or housing code to any governmental authority, or filed suit alleging such violation; or*
 - (b) **Joined or attempted to organize a tenant’s union or association; or***
 - (c) Asserted, or attempted to assert any right specifically accorded to tenants under state or local law.”*
- **Document any interactions any tenants have with the landlord or the landlord’s staff.**
 - Especially about the idea of organizing. It’s hard to prove that a landlord took action against a tenant because of their participation in a tenant union.
 - Prefer written or email communication over spoken. Use call recorder apps.
 - Share your communications with your neighbors and cross check them against your neighbors. You can catch a lying landlord this way.
- **Read and understand your lease.** Make sure you aren’t accidentally breaking some rule that your landlord could use against you. Don’t give your landlord an excuse to kick you out!
- If you have any questions about your lease, the law, or your rights then **ask the Tenant Resource Center (TRC)!**
 - Visit their website: tenantresourcecenter.org
 - Office: 1202 Williamson Street, Suite 102, Madison, WI 53703
 - Hours: Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm, no appointments necessary
 - Phone (Dane County): 608-257-0006

Report to the Authorities

Few things will motivate a landlord to do repairs more than the threat of being inspected.

1. Before contacting an inspector, make a written request to your landlord for the repairs and try to make sure you also have a way to document the landlord’s response.
2. If the landlord does not respond or fails to make the repair then contact the building inspector.
3. Call **(608) 266-4551 (for Madison)** and ask to **report a housing problem**.
4. If the inspector cites the landlord and then the landlord fails to make repairs, tenants may qualify for rent abatement.

Many tenant protections in Wisconsin are found in the regulations of the Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP). DATCP will investigate complaints made about landlords’ bad business practices and issue formal statements and can refer cases to the State Attorney General’s Office.



Direct Action

When the official legal channels fail to address injustice. All of these tactics only work when done in a group; the more the better. They are also best done in when you gradually escalate in aggression. Don't jump to a rent strike without delivering a letter of demands.

- **Letter of Demands:** Deliver a letter detailing what you and your neighbors want in person, at the start of any campaign.
- **Phone Zap:** Have your neighbors and supporters call in to the landlord's phone one at a time.
- **Protest at their Office:** Like a letter of demands, but with a banner and a megaphone.
- **Flyer the Neighborhood:** Print "Community Notices" explaining your issues with the landlord and advise people to not rent with them. Keep your information to facts that you have documented or else it's slander.
- **Go to the Press:** Contact a local press or news station about your issues about the landlord
- **Contact your alderman:** This is mostly useful for fast tracking a city inspector. <>
- **Pressure elected officials:** This will require some research and only works on larger landlords. Municipal politics is dominated by real estate and landlords. Find out who your landlord donates and confront them for taking donations from a negligent landlord.

