

### **Excerpts from Timothy Page**

Hard facts and market dynamics suggest that increasing hardship for owners can drive independent landlords out of business, ultimately reducing housing availability, flexibility, and affordability—exacerbating the housing crisis.

Landlords face rising property taxes, maintenance costs, and insurance premiums, which have increased significantly in recent years due to inflation and Vermont's aging housing stock. For example, the Vermont Department of Taxes reported a 5-7% annual increase in property tax rates in many municipalities between 2020 and 2024, directly impacting landlords' operating costs.

When policies focus solely on tenant protections—such as slowing evictions or mandating back-rent assistance without reciprocal support for landlords—they risk creating an unsustainable environment for property owners. Eviction delays, while beneficial for tenants in the short term, often leave landlords unpaid for months, over 70% of evictions are for nonpayment of rent. A 2023 study by the National Apartment Association found that prolonged eviction moratoriums during the COVID-19 pandemic led to an average loss of \$3,000-\$5,000 per unit for small landlords nationwide due to unpaid rent and legal fees. In Vermont, with its small market and limited economies of scale, such losses can force independent landlords to sell their properties, apply the loss against new or existing tenants or exit the rental market entirely.

Independent landlords exiting the market reduces the overall supply of rental units. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Vermont lost approximately 2% of its rental housing stock between 2019 and 2023 due to conversions, flood damage, and owners ceasing to rent. Policies that make landlording financially unviable accelerate this trend.

Instead of focusing solely on slowing evictions, Vermont's Legislature should consider policies that alleviate burdens on small-scale landlords, such as tax incentives for maintaining affordable rents, grants for property maintenance, or streamlined access to emergency rental assistance funds to cover unpaid rent. Without such measures, the state risks losing the very housing providers who offer the most flexibility and community-oriented solutions.

Hard facts—rising operating costs, thin profit margins, and the risk of market exit—demonstrate that policies disproportionately favoring tenants can reduce housing supply and flexibility, ultimately harming renters through higher costs and fewer options.. Failing to address the challenges faced by property owners risks deepening the housing shortage. Where are landlords supposed to turn when policies make their business unsustainable? Until we answer that question honestly, focusing only on tenant protections isn't a solution—it's a way to push more housing out of reach.

## H.772

Below are the listed reasons a tenant can fight an eviction for non-payment. I am concerned about the open ended language such as "any condition" or "conditions present" or "obstacles" rather than explicit causes outlined in a safety code; additionally there is no language as to what or who specifically caused the condition. All of the reasons listed below could be caused by the tenant or circumstances beyond the control of the landlord. The paragraph below must be added to this section:

“A tenant is allowed to fight an eviction for non-payment only if any of the following conditions were caused by the direct neglect of the landlord; if any of these conditions are caused by the tenant or a circumstance beyond the control of the landlord, the tenant waives their right to fight an eviction”.

Reasons for including the above paragraph: 1) tenants can and have caused some of these conditions in order to stop paying rent, while remaining in the apartment , 2) conditions (A) (B) (C) (D) (G) (H) and (I) could be caused by the tenant or conditions over which the landlord has no control, 3) conditions in (E) and (F) could be caused by a winter storm over which the landlord has no control and lastly 4) condition (J) could be caused by the tenant disconnecting the detector which they frequently do.

Thank you for your consideration...Joyce

(A) any condition that jeopardizes the security of the unit;

(B) major plumbing leaks, flooding, or waterlogged ceiling or

flooring in imminent danger of falling in;

(C) gas or fuel oil leaks;

(D) electrical conditions that could result in shock or fire;

(E) absence of a working heating system when outside temperature is

below 60 degrees Fahrenheit;

(F) utilities not in service, including no running hot water;

(G) conditions that present the immediate possibility of serious

injury;

(H) obstacles that prevent the safe entrance into or exit from the

dwelling unit;

(I) absence of a functional toilet within the dwelling unit; or

(J) inoperable smoke or carbon monoxide detectors.

Joyce George  
Shelburne, Vermont