

August 5, 2020

Word Count: 227

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QuickPoint! – Oregon Needs a Moratorium on Overbroad Laws

By Vlad Yurlov

Once again, Oregon's legislature has succumbed to shortsighted politics. Effective June 30, House Bill 4213 prohibits landlords from evicting tenants due to nonpayment until next April, regardless of their circumstances.

Of course, there could be many reasons tenants might not pay their rent. One of the most pressing is Oregon's lockdown policy, which effectively prohibited many businesses and entire industries from operating, and their employees from supporting themselves. While these conditions may warrant legislative action, people who have continued to earn an income may simply choose to delay their rent payments.

By being so broadly applied, this legislation will harm landlords, particularly small private owners who still must pay utilities and property taxes on their units. But property owners won't be alone in suffering. This moratorium will make it even harder for people to find apartments for rent, because only the most secure tenants would be considered during a time when anyone can simply put off their payments. In addition, the end of the moratorium likely will bring more debt, eviction, and ultimately homelessness to an already stretched system.

Legislators should understand that seemingly simplistic quick fixes can cause long-run damage. This legislation will push Oregon from having a health crisis to an even deeper housing crisis. Laws should be made with specificity, not reactionary haste.

Vlad Yurlov is a Policy Analyst at Cascade Policy Institute, Oregon's free market public policy research center.

