

THE TENANT

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STORY OF THE MONTH: RENT EATS FIRST...AND LAST AND EVERYTHING

By Hal S.

A majority of Idahoans these days are living paycheck to paycheck. They spend the bulk of their income on rent and have nothing left for emergencies. This month, BTU helped out three tenants in this exact situation; all facing hardships because their money was eaten up by rent. The first was Karen. She was evicted and had to move immediately, yet she had no money left for moving expenses after all her money went to rent. With nowhere to turn, BTU member Cory stepped in, paying for a moving truck, and with the rest of the Direct Action Team's help, Karen was able to move. Monica was another tenant in a similar situation. She relies on government assistance, but even that doesn't save someone from living month to month. She, like Karen, had no money for moving expenses, so BTU stepped up and spent 20+ hours helping her move to her new home. Then there was Patrick. Patrick, an 80 year old man, is a prime example of how, no matter the living conditions, Boise tenants still have to fork over the lion's share of their income towards rent. Patrick's apartment had black mold and a termite infestation, yet he still had to pay the full rent amount. So he had no money left over to fight back, no money left to sue his landlord for better conditions. He needed help, so BTU stepped in. We negotiated better conditions with his landlord and pointed Patrick towards free legal resources that too many tenants don't know are available. All of these stories are examples of what it means to live paycheck to paycheck due to both the current housing climate in Boise and the greedy landlords that hold tenants hostage. When we can't help ourselves in this climate, we have to help each other.



LEGISLATIVE NEWS: A LEGISLATIVE FUTURE TO AIM FOR

By: Lauren S.

In 2019 Illinois passed the Immigrant Tenant Protection Act (ITPA). This is a law created to prevent landlords from discriminating against or harassing tenants based off of their immigration status— actual status OR perceived status. Crucially, it also bars landlords from using the threat of calling ICE or from outright reporting tenants as a means of intimidation or retaliation. (cont. pg. 2)



LEGISLATIVE NEWS: CONTINUED

And for the first time since 2019, when the ITPA was passed into law, a case brought to court under the ITPA has reached a judgment. A judge ordered that a Chicago family receive over \$80,000 dollars in damages from their former landlords who threatened to call ICE on them. With the support of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund and the couple's bravery to speak up, they are getting justice.

But only three states have this kind of protection, and Idaho (unsurprisingly) is not one of them. California, Illinois, and Colorado each have passed a version of this law to protect immigrant tenants. A law that takes one meager step towards recognizing the basic rights of tenants, the right to live safely and comfortably in their homes. The couple said it best in their statement, "Just because someone is your landlord does not mean that they get to do whatever they want to you." That's the future we have to aim for.



ISSUES OF INTERSECTION: HOUSING & DECARBONIZATION

By: a BTU Member

Across the United States, homes and buildings contribute to more than a third of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions annually. As a result, policymakers with an interest in reducing these emissions have started to turn their focus toward policy proposals that push landlords to improve the energy efficiency of their rental units. While such policies would represent a positive step toward a healthier planet, tenants unions across the country are giving voice to the concern that landlords may respond by raising rents and displacing tenants in the name of green upgrades.

The director of the national Tenant Union Federation (TUF), Tara Raghuveer, has highlighted the ways in which landlords customarily use even basic, necessary health and safety repairs as excuses to hike rent. For this reason, she argues, decarbonization upgrades must be coupled with rent regulations and other protections to keep tenants housed. Meanwhile, the Connecticut Tenants Union has been pushing a state bill that would expand "just cause" protections – which limit the reasons for which a tenant can be evicted – to ensure they cover green and other renovations. (cont. pg.3)



ISSUES OF INTERSECTION: CONTINUED

The housing policy director of the Climate and Community Institute, an organization advocating tenant protections alongside environmental protections, made a statement to the Context news agency that we find poignant: "Most of the tenant protections that I work on are typically done at the state and local level," says Ruthy Gourevitch, "and can happen through direct negotiations between tenants and landlords." Gourevitch's observation goes to show that the power to improve tenants' circumstances lies with us already – in the actions of local efforts and community conversations. Never hesitate to reach out if you are interested in organizing to fight with us for protections against your landlord, whether it's related to green upgrades or otherwise.

WHAT WE'RE LISTENING TO



Podcast: The Dig

Episode— Building the Union
W/ Hannah Srajer (Feb 1st)

WHAT WE'RE READING



Book: No Shortcuts: Organizing for
Power in the New Gilded Age
By: Jane F. McAlevey

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TENANT RESOURCES:

- Wrest Collective
<https://wrest.coop/>
- Intermountain Fair Housing Council (IFHC)
ifhcidaho.org
- Idaho Legal Aid
www.idaholegalaid.org
- Boise Mutual Aid Collective
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