



JANUARY 2023



**Vote on Friday: Will city leaders enact permanent renter safeguards before they expire?
COVID-Era Tenant Protections Are Being
Phased Out at the End of January**

January 19, 2023
By Jessica Goodheart

When the COVID state of emergency expires at the end of the month, so will a set of renter protections that are credited with reducing the growth of homelessness in the city of Los Angeles during the COVID pandemic.

The expiration of the eviction moratorium has advocates worried about tenants losing their homes at a time when 42,000 people in the city are unhoused. In fact, evictions are already on the rise. **“We’re headed to an economic train wreck,”** said Larry Gross, executive director of the [Coalition for Economic Survival](#). **“We’re seeing higher attendance at our clinics. More and more people are being threatened and harassed with evictions.”**

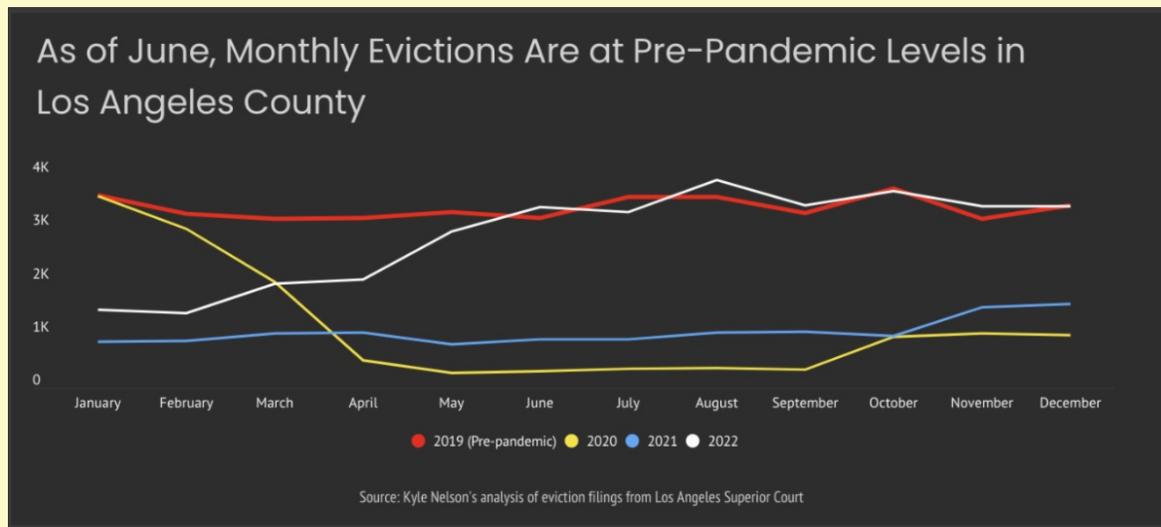


Advocates had hoped to pair the expiration of the eviction moratorium with a robust set of tenant protections. But the council, distracted by scandal, did not act. The

looming deadline — and the growing pro-tenant bloc on the Los Angeles City Council — has changed that dynamic. Now the council appears poised to act on a package of tenant protections as soon as Friday .

As councilmembers hashed out the details of the package in the Housing Committee on Wednesday, Councilmember Nithya Raman, who chairs the committee, expressed frustration that decisions about the contents of those provisions were being made “under the gun as these protections are expiring.”

“I would have loved to have this fulsome discussion on these issues six months ago,” she said, as the debate between councilmembers on the committee became contentious.



Even with the current protections still in place, Kyle Nelson, a UCLA doctoral fellow who studies tenant issues, has identified a sharp increase in evictions in L.A. County in recent months, returning to pre-pandemic levels after sharply dropping following the eviction moratorium and protections. The tenant rights movement has an ambitious agenda that can't be realized by the end of the month. But in the short term, Raman has introduced a short list of proposals. They include expanding “just cause” eviction protection, which is currently available only to those living in rent control units built before 1978. Just cause protection requires landlords to demonstrate that tenants had failed to pay rent, created a nuisance or otherwise violated their lease before they can evict them. (Under the policy, landlords can still pursue no-cause evictions and pay relocation assistance.)

Another proposal would require landlords to offer relocation assistance for tenants if they impose excessive rent increases of 10% or greater; an additional proposal would prevent a landlord from evicting tenants who are no more than a month behind in their rent.

A final proposal would extend for one year protections for renters against being evicted on account of unauthorized pets or residents in their units; such protection is currently in place under COVID-era rules.

Raman presented the package she outlined at the rally as a set of common sense reforms. “These are recommendations that came out of the Housing Department’s experience with vulnerable tenants,” she told Capital & Main. Failing to adopt them “would be counter to the agenda of every single person around that horseshoe, as well

as the mayor.” Mayor Karen Bass has made tackling homelessness her top priority.

At yesterday’s Housing Committee meeting, Councilmember Bob Blumenfield introduced an amendment to the proposed just cause ordinance that seemed to take Raman off guard. Blumenfield’s amendment delays the implementation of just cause protections for 12 months — or until a tenant’s lease expires, whichever comes first. He introduced the amendment out of concern for those property owners who might want to rent their homes on a short-term basis, who then might be forced to pay relocation assistance to their tenants.

“Short term leases have a place in our rental market,” Blumenfield said at the meeting. “And it helps a lot of people get by. We have actors who go off on shoots. We have traveling nurses. We have all sorts of folks who literally rent out their condo.” Short-term rentals are prohibited in rent control units.

Raman said there had not been time to assess the implications of this amendment for the tenants the ordinance aimed to protect. Councilmember Marqueece Harris-Dawson said he worried about unscrupulous landlords finding new tenants before they became subject to just cause protection. They both voted against the amendment to the ordinance, but Councilmembers Monica Rodriguez and John Lee supported it.

Tenant advocates, including former Councilmember Mike Bonin, expressed concern about the amendment after the meeting. The amendment “significantly undermines the effort to provide universal just cause” protection, he wrote in a text to Capital & Main. “I hope the Council will reverse that amendment and pass the full package of recommendations from the Housing Department.”

**The City Council is scheduled to vote on the proposals Friday.
Contact Your City Councilmember NOW to Urge Their Support!**

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Proposals for Tenant Protections

Just cause protection. A requirement that all landlords show “just cause” — such as failure to pay rent — before evicting a tenant. “Just cause” protections already exist for the city’s rent controlled apartments, built before 1978. (Under the policy, landlords can still pursue no-cause evictions and pay relocation assistance.)

Relocation assistance. If landlords enact large rent increases — raising rent by more than 10% in a year or by the current level of inflation plus 5%, whichever is lower — they must pay relocation assistance to tenants.

A threshold for eviction based on nonpayment of rent. Tenants who fall one month behind on rent would be protected from facing eviction. Such a policy was already approved by the county.

Protection for tenants housing pets and unauthorized occupants. Landlords would be prevented from evicting tenants due to the presence in their apartments of pets or occupants who are not listed on the lease. This policy extends for one year a COVID-19 eviction protection that is linked to the state of emergency that is expiring at the end of the month.

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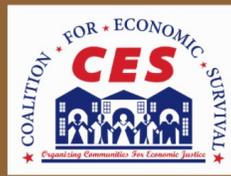


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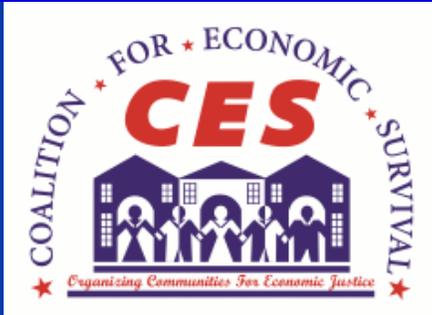
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