

Tenant Protections During COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic isn't solely a health crisis, but an economic one as well. Thousands of Washingtonians have been laid off or had their hours cut back at work, threatening their ability to pay rent and meet other basic needs. In order to keep people safely home, state and local lawmakers have instated increased protections for renters during this crisis.

Eviction Moratoriums

Governor Inslee has instated a statewide moratorium on residential evictions, which means that tenants of residential properties may not be evicted from their homes due to non-payment of rent.

- *How does this protect renters?*

Renters cannot be evicted for an inability to pay their rent while this moratorium is in effect. During the moratorium, you should not receive any fees for late or partial rent payment, notices to pay or vacate, and no court notices about eviction proceedings. Writs (formal written orders that allow a sheriff to evict you within 72 hours) may not be issued during this moratorium. Existing writs and court dates will also be delayed until April 24 or later.

However, landlords are still allowed to conduct eviction proceedings for other lease violations-- such as a tenant's behavior being deemed an imminent threat to health and safety. Mobile homes are not protected under this moratorium.

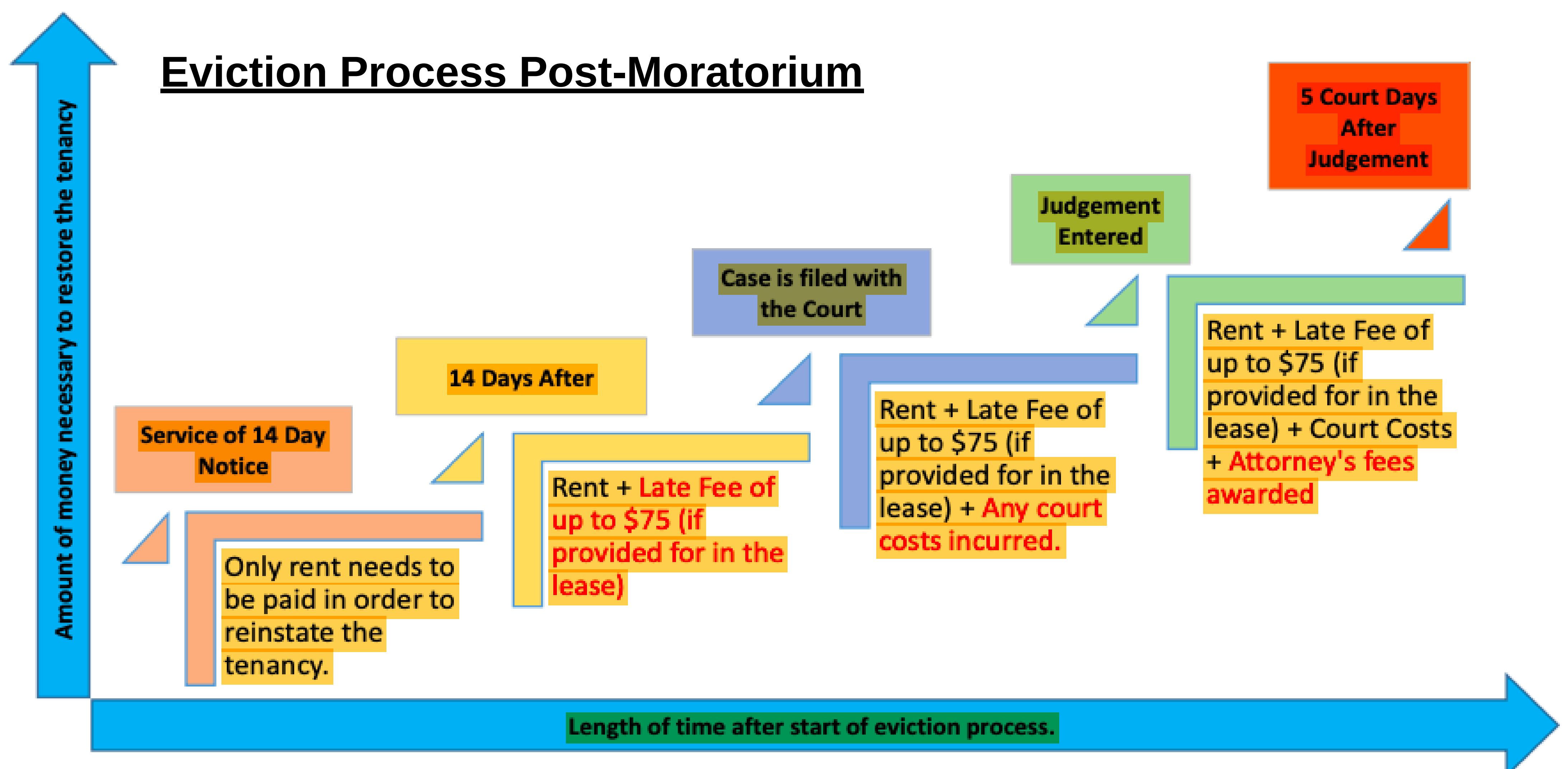
- *How long will this moratorium last?*

The statewide moratorium will last until April 17th, although housing and anti-poverty advocates are pushing for an extension. Some cities in Washington State have their own moratoriums that differ slightly from the statewide one. For example, Seattle has its own eviction moratorium that will last until May 16, with a possibility for extension.

- *What will happen when the moratorium ends?*

Tenants will be expected to pay the rent that is owed. Housing advocates encourage renters to use this moratorium as a time to discuss a payment plan with your landlord.

If the tenant does not pay the rent that is due, the landlord may serve a 14-day notice, after which eviction proceedings will proceed as illustrated by the timeline below. No eviction court cases due to non-payment of rent will be allowed to take place until after April 24. Tenants cannot be evicted without a court hearing.



Tools and information for tenants

- *What if I can't pay my rent when the moratorium is over?*

If you cannot pay your rent, **remember that you have options.**

- Start by speaking with your landlord and negotiating a payment plan. If your landlord waives rent, be sure to get this documented in writing.
- For referrals to non-profits who offer rental assistance in your area, call 211.
- Rent strikes should only be considered as a last resort, as it could end in eviction. If you do decide to strike, be sure you get participation from your entire building, and strike with a specific grievance in mind.
- Visit the following resources for more in-depth information:

-WA Emergency Housing Protections (spreadsheet)

-WA Law Help

-King County Housing Justice Project

-Northwest Justice Project



- *What tips are there for speaking with my landlord?*

Landlords cannot terminate a lease prematurely for non-payment of rent, but they may not renew it.

If you fear retaliation from your landlord due to non-payment of rent, call 211 for tenant protection hotlines.

Remember to always put all communication to and from your landlord in writing.

- *What if the property I live in is being foreclosed?*

If your landlord is unable to pay the housing costs they owe on the property you live in, the property may be subject to foreclosure. If this happens, you will either be allowed to finish your lease or be given a 90-day notice. If your landlord chooses to sell before your lease is up, the lease agreement will continue with the new owner.

- *What other tenant protections are being discussed?*

Housing advocates are pushing for the Governor to extend this eviction moratorium beyond April 17, and to also consider instating other methods of tenant protections such as rent freezes, increased rental assistance, and prevention of late fee accrual. We will let you know if these measures pass.