

MISSISSIPPI CODE

TITLE 89. REAL AND PERSONAL PROPERTY

CHAPTER 8. RESIDENTIAL LANDLORD AND TENANT ACT

Sec. 89-8-1. Short title

This chapter shall be known and may be cited as the "Residential Landlord and Tenant Act."

Sec. 89-8-3. Application

(1) This chapter shall apply to, regulate and determine rights, obligations and remedies under any rental agreement entered into after July 1, 1991, wherever made, for a dwelling unit located within this state. The rights, obligations and remedies of this chapter shall be in addition to all other rights, obligations and remedies provided by law and shall not alter or abridge the rights, obligations and remedies available to residential landlords and tenants pursuant to Sections 89-7-1 through 89-7-125.

(2) The following arrangements are not governed by this chapter:

- (a) Residence at an institution, public or private, if incidental to detention or the provision of medical, geriatric, educational, counseling, religious or similar service;
- (b) Occupancy under a contract of sale of a dwelling unit or the property of which it is a part, if the occupant is the purchaser or a person who succeeds to his interest;
- (c) Occupancy by a member of a fraternal or social organization in the portion of a structure operated for the benefit of the organization;
- (d) Transient occupancy in a hotel, motel or lodgings;
- (e) Occupancy by an owner of a condominium unit or a holder of a proprietary lease in a cooperative; or
- (f) Occupancy under a rental agreement covering premises used by the occupant primarily for agricultural purposes or when the occupant is performing agricultural labor for the owner and such premises are rented for less than fair rental value.

Sec. 89-8-5. Waiver in rental agreement

In any agreement, oral or written, for the rental of real property as a dwelling place, a landlord or tenant may not agree to waive or otherwise forego any of the rights, duties or remedies under this chapter, except as otherwise provided by this chapter

- (a) Authorizes any person to confess judgment on a claim arising out of the rental agreement; or

(b) Agrees to the exculpation or limitation of any liability of the landlord arising as a result of the landlord's willful misconduct or the costs connected therewith.

Sec. 89-8-7. Definitions; Notice to Landlord's Agent

(1) Subject to additional definitions contained in subsequent sections of this chapter which apply to specific sections or parts thereof, and unless the context otherwise requires, in this chapter:

(a) "Building and housing codes" includes any law, ordinance, or governmental regulation concerning fitness for habitation, construction, maintenance, operation, occupancy or use of any premises or dwelling unit;

(b) "Dwelling unit" means a structure or the part of a structure that is used as a home, residence or sleeping place by one (1) person who maintains a household or by two (2) or more persons who maintain a common household;

(c) "Good faith" means honesty in fact in the conduct of the transaction concerned and observation of reasonable community standards of fair dealing;

(d) "Landlord" means the owner, lessor or sublessor of the dwelling unit or the building of which it is a part, or the agent representing such owner, lessor or sublessor;

(e) "Organization" includes a corporation, government, governmental subdivision or agency, business trust, estate, trust, partnership or association, two (2) or more persons having a joint or common interest, and any other legal or commercial entity;

(f) "Owner" means one or more persons, jointly or severally, in whom is vested (i) all or part of the legal title to property or (ii) all or part of the beneficial ownership and a right to present use and enjoyment of the premises, and the term includes a mortgagee in possession;

(g) "Premises" means a dwelling unit and the structure of which it is a part, facilities and appurtenances therein, and grounds, areas and facilities held out for the use of tenants generally or whose use is promised to the tenant;

(h) "Rent" means all payments to be made to the landlord under the rental agreement;

(i) "Rental agreement" means all agreements, written or oral, and valid rules and regulations adopted under Section 89-8-11 embodying the terms and conditions concerning the use and occupancy of a dwelling unit and premises;

(j) "Tenant" means a person entitled under a rental agreement to occupy a dwelling unit to the exclusion of others;

(k) "Qualified tenant management organizations" means any organization incorporated under the Mississippi Nonprofit Corporation Act, a majority of the directors of which are tenants of the housing project to be managed under a contract authorized by this section and which is able to

conform to standards set by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development as capable of satisfactorily performing the operational and management functions delegated to it by the contract.

(2) For purposes of giving any notice required under this chapter, notice given to the agent of the landlord is equivalent to giving notice to the landlord. The landlord may contract with an agent to assume all the rights and duties of the landlord under this chapter; provided, however, that such a contract does not relieve the landlord of ultimate liability in regard to such rights and duties.

Sec. 89-8-11. Use and occupancy rules

(1) A landlord may, from time to time, adopt rules or regulations, however described, concerning the tenant's use and occupancy of the premises. They are enforceable against the tenant only if:

(a) Their purpose is to promote the convenience, safety or welfare of the tenants in the premises, preserve the landlord's property from abuse, or make a fair distribution of services and facilities provided for the tenants generally;

(b) They are reasonably related to the purpose for which they are adopted;

(c) They apply to all tenants in the premises in a fair manner;

(d) They are sufficiently explicit in their prohibition, direction or limitation of the tenant's conduct to fairly inform him of what he must or must not do to comply;

(e) They are not for the purpose of evading the obligations of the landlord.

(2) A rule or regulation adopted or amended after the tenant enters into the rental agreement is enforceable against the tenant if reasonable notice of its adoption or amendment is given to the tenant and it does not work a substantial modification of the rental agreement.

(3) If the dwelling unit is an apartment in a horizontal property regime, the tenant shall comply with the bylaws of the association of the apartment owners; and if the dwelling unit is an apartment in a cooperative housing corporation, the tenant shall comply with the bylaws of the corporation.

(4) Unless otherwise agreed, the tenant shall occupy his dwelling unit only as a dwelling unit.

Sec. 89-8-9. Good faith

Every duty under this chapter and every act which must be performed as a condition precedent to the exercise of a right or remedy under this chapter, including the landlord's termination of a tenancy or nonrenewal of a lease, imposes an obligation of good faith in its performance or enforcement.

Sec. 89-8-13. Right to terminate tenancy; notice

(1) If there is a material noncompliance by the tenant with the rental agreement or the obligations imposed by Section 89-8-25, the landlord may terminate the tenancy as set out in subsection (3) of this section or resort to any other remedy at law or in equity except as prohibited by this chapter.

(2) If there is a material noncompliance by the landlord with the rental agreement or the obligations imposed by Section 89-8-23, the tenant may terminate the tenancy as set out in subsection (3) of this section or resort to any other remedy at law or in equity except as prohibited by this chapter.

(3) The nonbreaching party may deliver a written notice to the party in breach specifying the acts and omissions constituting the breach and that the rental agreement will terminate upon a date not less than thirty (30) days after receipt of the notice if the breach is not remedied within a reasonable time not in excess of thirty (30) days; and the rental agreement shall terminate and the tenant shall surrender possession as provided in the notice subject to the following:

(a) If the breach is remediable by repairs, the payment of damages, or otherwise, and the breaching party adequately remedies the breach prior to the date specified in the notice, the rental agreement shall not terminate;

(b) In the absence of a showing of due care by the breaching party, if substantially the same act or omission which constituted a prior noncompliance of which notice was given recurs within six (6) months, the nonbreaching party may terminate the rental agreement upon at least fourteen (14) days' written notice specifying the breach and the date of termination of the rental agreement;

(c) Neither party may terminate for a condition caused by his own deliberate or negligent act or omission or that of a member of his family or other person on the premises with his consent.

(4) If the rental agreement is terminated, the landlord shall return all prepaid and unearned rent and security recoverable by the tenant under Section 89-8-21.

(5) Notwithstanding the provisions of this section or any other provisions of this chapter to the contrary, if the material noncompliance by the tenant is the nonpayment of rent pursuant to the rental agreement, the landlord shall not be required to deliver thirty (30) days' written notice as provided by subsection (3) of this section. In such event, the landlord may seek removal of the tenant from the premises in the manner and with the notice prescribed by Chapter 7, Title 89, Mississippi Code of 1972.

Sec. 89-8-15. Repair of defects

(1) If, within thirty (30) days after written notice to the landlord of a specific and material defect which constitutes a breach of the terms of the rental agreement or of the obligation of the landlord under Section 89-8-23, the landlord fails to repair such defect, the tenant:

(a) May repair such defect himself; and

(b) Except as otherwise provided in subsection (2) of this section, shall be entitled to reimbursement of the expenses of such repairs within forty-five (45) days after submission to the landlord of receipted bills for such work, provided that:

(i) The tenant has fulfilled his affirmative obligations under Section 89-8-25;

(ii) The expenses incurred in making such repairs do not exceed an amount equal to one (1) month's rent;

(iii) The tenant has not exercised the remedy provided by this section in the six (6) months immediately preceding; and

(iv) The tenant is current in his rental payment.

(2) A tenant shall not be entitled to be reimbursed for repairs made pursuant to this section in an amount greater than the usual and customary charge for such repairs.

(3) Before correcting a condition affecting facilities shared by more than one (1) dwelling unit, the tenant shall notify all other tenants sharing such facilities of his plans and shall so arrange the work as to create the least practicable inconvenience to the other tenants.

(4) The cost of repairs made by a tenant pursuant to this section may be offset against future rent.

(5) No provision of this section shall be construed to grant a lien against the real property.

Sec. 89-8-19. Length of tenancy

(1) Unless the rental agreement fixes a definite term a tenancy shall be week to week in case of a tenant who pays weekly rent, and in all other cases month to month.

(2) The landlord or the tenant may terminate a week-to-week tenancy by written notice given to the other at least seven (7) days prior to the termination date.

(3) The landlord or the tenant may terminate a month-to-month tenancy by a written notice given to the other at least thirty (30) days prior to the termination date.

(4) Notwithstanding the provisions of this section or any other provision of this chapter to the contrary, notice to terminate a tenancy shall not be required to be given when the landlord or tenant has committed a substantial violation of the rental agreement or this chapter that materially affects health and safety.

Sec. 89-8-21. Security deposit

(1) Any payment or deposit of money, the primary function of which is to secure the performance of a rental agreement or any part of such an agreement, other than a payment or deposit, including

an advance payment of rent, made to secure the execution of a rental agreement shall be governed by the provisions of this section.

(2) Any such payment or deposit of money shall be held by the landlord for the tenant who is a party to such agreement. The claim of a tenant to such payment or deposit shall be governed by the provisions of this section. The claim of a tenant to such payment or deposit shall be prior to the claim of any creditor of the landlord.

(3) The landlord, by written notice delivered to the tenant, may claim of such payment or deposit only such amounts as are reasonably necessary to remedy the tenant's defaults in the payment of rent, to repair damages to the premises caused by the tenant, exclusive of ordinary wear and tear, to clean such premises upon termination of the tenancy, or for other reasonable and necessary expenses incurred as the result of the tenant's default, if the payment or deposit is made for any or all of those specific purposes. The written notice by which the landlord claims all or any portion of such payment or deposit shall itemize the amounts claimed by such landlord. Any remaining portion of such payment or deposit shall be returned to the tenant no later than forty-five (45) days after the termination of his tenancy, the delivery of possession and demand by the tenant.

(4) The retention by a landlord or transferee of a payment or deposit or any portion thereof, in violation of this section and with absence of good faith, may subject the landlord or his transferee to damages not to exceed Two Hundred Dollars (\$200.00) in addition to any actual damages.

Sec. 89-8-23. Obligations of landlord

(1) A landlord shall at all times during the tenancy:

(a) Comply with the requirements of applicable building and housing codes materially affecting health and safety;

(b) Maintain the dwelling unit, its plumbing, heating and/or cooling system, in substantially the same condition as at the inception of the lease, reasonable wear and tear excluded, unless the dwelling unit, its plumbing, heating and/or cooling system is damaged or impaired as a result of the deliberate or negligent actions of the tenant.

(2) No duty on the part of the landlord shall arise under this section in connection with a defect which is caused by the deliberate or negligent act of the tenant or persons on the premises with the tenant's permission.

(3) Subject to the provisions of Section 89-8-5, the landlord and tenant may agree in writing that the tenant perform some or all of the landlord's duties under this section, but only if the transaction is entered into in good faith.

(4) No duty on the part of the landlord shall arise under this section in connection with a defect which is caused by the tenant's affirmative act or failure to comply with his obligations under Section 89-8-25.

Sec. 89-8-25. Obligations of tenant

A tenant shall:

- (a) Keep that part of the premises that he occupies and uses as clean and as safe as the condition of the premises permits;
- (b) Dispose from his dwelling unit all ashes, rubbish, garbage and other waste in a clean and safe manner in compliance with community standards;
- (c) Keep all plumbing fixtures in the dwelling unit used by the tenant as clean as their condition permits;
- (d) Use in a reasonable manner all electrical, plumbing, sanitary, heating, ventilating, air conditioning and other facilities and appliances, including elevators, in the premises;
- (e) Not deliberately or negligently destroy, deface, damage, impair or remove any part of the premises or knowingly permit any other person to do so;
- (f) Conduct himself and require other persons on the premises with his consent to conduct themselves in a manner that will not disturb his neighbors' peaceful enjoyment of their premises;
- (g) Inform the landlord of any condition of which he has actual knowledge which may cause damage to the premises;
- (h) To the extent of his legal obligation, maintain the dwelling unit in substantially the same condition, reasonable wear and tear excepted, and comply with the requirements of applicable building and housing codes materially affecting health and safety;
- (i) Not engage in any illegal activity upon the leased premises as documented by a law enforcement agency.

Sec. 89-8-27. Housing authorities; tenant management organization

Any county, municipality, regional housing authority or local housing authority in the state may make application to and contract with qualified tenant management organizations for the operation and management of housing projects of the authority as a means of reducing vacancies, reducing administrative costs and creating jobs from the establishment of maintenance teams. Such counties, municipalities, regional housing authorities or local housing authorities shall have the authority to sell public housing units to such tenant management organizations, provided that such sale is in compliance with any applicable federal laws and regulations and any applicable state laws and regulations.