

Can the Landlord Do That?

Can the landlord lock me out? RCW 59.18.290

❖ **RCW stands for [Revised Code of Washington](#).** The RCW's are Washington state's laws.

No. Your landlord cannot lock you out of the unit, no matter what. The landlord cannot

- change locks
- add new locks
- keep you from entering the unit in any way
- lock you out even if you are behind in rent

The landlord must file an eviction suit in court and win a court order giving permission to evict you.

Can the landlord shut off my utilities? RCW 59.18.300

Only to make repairs. The landlord cannot shut off your utilities

- Because you are behind in rent.
- To try to make you move.

It is also illegal for the landlord to stop paying the utility bills in order to turn off the service.

You can take your landlord to court if the landlord shuts off your utilities. If you win, the judge can award you up to \$100 for each day you had no utilities.

Can the landlord take my personal belongings?

Only if you abandon the unit. [RCW 59.18.310](#). Under state law, you have abandoned the place **only** if both of these are true:

- You have fallen behind on rent.
- You have told your landlord, in words, actions or writing that you are moving out. [RCW 59.18.310](#).

It is illegal for the landlord to put in the rental agreement that they can take your property.

If your landlord takes your things, contact the landlord in writing. If you do not get your things back that way, call the police. You can take the landlord to court to force the landlord to give your things back. The judge can award you up to \$500 for each day the landlord kept your things, up to \$5,000.

Can the landlord rent a condemned place to me?

Landlords cannot rent property with existing code violations. [RCW 59.18.085\(1\)](#). You can sue if you find out the landlord knew at the time of renting to you that the property violated code. [RCW 59.18.085\(2\)](#).

Can the landlord retaliate against me? RCW 59.18.240

The landlord cannot “retaliate” against you for taking legal action against the landlord.

Some possible cases of retaliation:

Example 1: You reported a big hole in your roof to the city. The city notifies your landlord that they are going to inspect your place. The landlord then tells you he is going to raise the rent.

Example 2: You properly notify the landlord that you are deducting costs for repairs from your rent. After getting this notice, the landlord has your heat shut off. Your heat is unrelated to the repairs you needed made.

If your landlord does takes an adverse action against you within 90 days of legal action you took against him, it may count as retaliation and be illegal. Talk to a lawyer if you think the landlord may be illegally retaliating against you. You may be able to sue.

This publication provides general information concerning your rights and responsibilities. It is not intended as a substitute for specific legal advice.

This information is current as of April 2018.

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