

Governor Cooper Signs Executive Order Prohibiting COVID 19 Evictions And Utilities Shut Off

By Administrator
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Governor Roy Cooper issued Executive Order No. 171 to strengthen eviction protections to help North Carolina renters stay in their homes. With COVID-19 case counts increasing and many people continuing to work and learn remotely, preventing evictions is critical to the state's fight against this virus. This order supplements the existing NC HOPE initiative started two weeks ago that pays landlords and utilities directly to keep people in their homes with the lights on.

“Many families are trying to do the right thing, but this virus has made it difficult. Roughly three to 400,000 households across North Carolina are currently unable to pay rent. Therefore, today, I have signed a new Executive Order to prevent evictions in North Carolina for people who can't afford the rent,” said Governor Cooper. “The result during this global pandemic will be more North Carolinians staying in their homes, more landlords getting paid rent, and fewer utility companies shutting off power.”

The economic toll of COVID-19 has left thousands of families struggling to make ends meet. According to a [report](#) from the National Council of State Housing Agencies, approximately 300,000 – 410,000 households across North Carolina are currently unable to pay rent, and an estimated 240,000 eviction filings will be submitted by January 2021.

Last month, the Center for Disease Control and Protection (CDC) put a temporary residential eviction moratorium into effect nationwide from September 4 through December 31, 2020. The CDC order protects residential tenants from eviction for nonpayment of rent. However, confusion over who this order protects has caused inconsistent enforcement and unwarranted evictions in some parts of the state.

Executive Order No. 171 requires landlords to make residential tenants aware of their rights under the CDC Order. For eviction actions commencing after Executive Order No. 171, landlords must give residents the option to fill out a declaration form before starting any eviction action.

The Order also sets forth procedures to ensure protection for residential tenants once they provide the required declaration form to the court or to the landlord.

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Executive Order No. 171 also clarifies the CDC moratorium so that it clearly applies to all North Carolinians who meet the CDC's eligibility criteria, regardless of whether they live in federally-subsidized properties. The Order ensures that recipients of the N.C. Housing Opportunities and Prevention of Evictions (HOPE) program are still able to qualify and that these renter protections will apply to North Carolinians regardless of the CDC Order's status in other courts.

Today's Order received concurrence from the Council of State.

Two weeks ago, Governor Cooper launched the \$117 million NC HOPE program that provides assistance to eligible low-and-moderate income renters experiencing financial hardship due to the pandemic by making direct payments to landlords and utility companies. This program has received 22,800 eligible applications as of today. Given the demand for assistance shown over the last two weeks, the state will continue working to boost the HOPE program so it can help more North Carolinians make ends meet.

"The HOPE program is going a long way to help families stay safe in their homes by using coronavirus funds responsibly to pay landlord and utilities directly," said Governor Cooper. "My administration is continuing to find ways to help struggling renters, but we still need Washington to put partisanship aside and send more relief to North Carolina."

People can apply for help by calling 2-1-1 or going to nc211.org/hope .

In addition, to help ease housing concerns, North Carolina is funding the Back@Home program, which helps families experiencing homelessness and provides financial relief to some landlords whose tenants are at risk of homelessness.