

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2011

A N A C T

RELATING TO PROPERTY - RESIDENTIAL LANDLORD TENANT ACT

Introduced By: Senator John J. Tassoni

Date Introduced: January 11, 2011

Referred To: Senate Judiciary

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Sections 34-18-35 and 34-18-56 of the General Laws in Chapter 34-18
2 entitled "Residential Landlord and Tenant Act" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **34-18-35. Eviction for nonpayment of rent.** -- (a) If any part of the stipulated rent is due
4 and in arrears for ~~fifteen (15)~~ ten (10) days, the landlord shall send a written notice, in a form
5 substantially similar to that provided in section 34-18-56(a), specifying the amount of the rent
6 which is ~~fifteen (15)~~ ten (10) days in arrears, making demand for the rent, and notifying the tenant
7 that unless he or she cures the breach within five (5) days of the date of mailing of the notice, the
8 rental agreement shall terminate, and the landlord shall commence an eviction action in the
9 appropriate district court or housing court.

10 (b) If the tenant fails to cure his or her breach by paying the stipulated rent in arrears
11 within five (5) days of the date of mailing of the notice, the landlord may commence an eviction
12 action against the tenant, which shall be filed no earlier than the sixth (6th) day after mailing of
13 the written demand notice. The action shall be commenced by filing a "Complaint for Eviction
14 for Nonpayment of Rent" in the appropriate court in the form provided in section 34-18-56(d).

15 (c) The summons for eviction for nonpayment of rent shall specify the date for hearing
16 and be in the form provided in section 34-18-56(g). The summons shall specify that the defendant
17 may file and serve his or her answer prior to or at the time of hearing, and that if he or she fails to
18 answer or appear at the hearing, he or she shall be defaulted.

19 (d) If the defendant files his or her answer and commences discovery prior to the

1 hearing, and it appears, for good cause shown, that the defendant will not be able to conduct his
2 or her defense without the benefit of discovery, the court may continue the hearing to allow a
3 reasonable time for the completion of discovery. In the case of such a continuance, the court may,
4 in its discretion, order interim rent, or other remedy, to be paid to preserve the status quo pending
5 hearing. Except as provided in this chapter, the landlord may recover possession and actual
6 damages. In cases where the tenant had received a demand notice pursuant to subsection (a)
7 within the six (6) months immediately preceding the filing of the action, and the tenant's
8 nonpayment was willful, the landlord may also recover a reasonable attorney's fee.

9 (e) The tenant shall have the right to cure his or her failure to pay rent by tendering the
10 full amount of rent prior to commencement of suit. If the tenant has not received a notice pursuant
11 to subsection (a) of this section within the six (6) months immediately preceding the filing of the
12 action, the tenant shall have the right to cure his or her failure to pay rent after commencement of
13 suit by tendering the full amount of rent in arrears, together with court costs, at the time of
14 hearing.

15 **34-18-56. Notices and complaint forms.** -- (a) A notice in substantially the following
16 language shall suffice for the purpose of giving a tenant a five (5) day demand for payment of
17 rent prior to commencement of an eviction pursuant to section 34-18-35:

18 FIVE-DAY DEMAND NOTICE
19 FOR NONPAYMENT OF RENT
20 R.I.G.L. 34-18-35

21 Date of Mailing: _____

22 TO: _____
23 (tenant)

24 _____
25 _____
26 (rental address)

27 You are now more than ~~fifteen~~ ten days in arrears for some or all of the rent owed under
28 your rental agreement. State law requires that you be sent this Notice of arrearage.

29 Unless you make payment of all rent in arrears within five days of the date this notice
30 was mailed to you, an eviction action may be instituted in court against you. You can prevent the
31 eviction by paying all rent owing within five days of the mailing of this notice.

32 If you believe you have a legal reason for not paying this rent, you will be able to present
33 that defense at the eviction hearing. The rent in arrears as of the above date is \$_____.

34 _____
35 (landlord or owner signature)
36

37

1 I certify that I placed in regular U.S. mail, first class postage prepaid, a copy of this
2 Notice, addressed to the tenant, on the _____ day of _____, ~~19~~ 20 _____.

3 _____
4 (landlord or owner signature)
5

6 (b) A notice in substantially the following language shall suffice for the purpose of giving
7 a tenant a notice of noncompliance with the rental agreement pursuant to section 34-18-36:

8 NOTICE OF NONCOMPLIANCE

9 R.I.G.L. 34-18-36

10 Date of Mailing: _____

11 TO: _____
12 (tenant)

13 _____
14 _____
15 (address)

16 You are in breach of your rental agreement, or of your legal duties under R.I.G.L. 34-18-
17 24, because you:

18 _____
19 _____
20 _____
21 (provide details)

22 To remedy this situation you must do the following within twenty days of the date of
23 mailing of this Notice:

24 _____
25 _____
26 _____

27 If you do not remedy this situation within twenty days, your rental agreement will
28 terminate without further notice on _____ (date, which must be not less than twenty-one
29 days from the date of mailing of this Notice). (NOTE: Under the law you lose this right to remedy
30 your noncompliance if this is the second notice on the same subject within the past six months.)
31 After that date an eviction case may begin in court, and you may be served with a complaint. You
32 will have the right to a hearing and to present any defenses you believe you have.

33 _____
34 (signature)
35 _____
36 _____
37 (name and address of land- lord/owner)

38 I certify that I placed in regular U.S. mail, first class postage prepaid, a copy of this
39 Notice, addressed to the tenant, on the _____ day of _____, ~~19~~ 20 _____.

40 _____
41 (landlord or owner signature)
42

1 (c) A notice in substantially the following language shall suffice for the purpose of giving
2 a tenant notice of termination of tenancy pursuant to section 34-18-37:

3 NOTICE OF TERMINATION OF TENANCY

4 R.I.G.L. 34-18-37

5 Date of Mailing: _____

6 TO: _____
7 (tenant)

8 _____
9 _____
10 (address)

11 You are hereby directed to vacate and remove your property and personal possessions
12 from the premises located at _____

13 (address of premises)
14 and deliver control of the premises to the landlord/owner on the first day after the end of your
15 current rental period, namely _____.
16 (insert date)

17
18 This notice is given for the purpose of terminating your tenancy. You must continue to
19 pay rent as it becomes due until the date indicated above. If you fail to pay that rent, a
20 nonpayment eviction action may be instituted against you.

21 If you fail to vacate the premises by the date specified, an eviction may be instituted
22 against you without further notice. If you believe you have a defense to this termination, you will
23 be able to raise that defense at the court hearing.

24 _____
25 (signature)

26 _____
27 _____
28 (name and address of land- lord/owner)

29 I certify that I placed in regular U.S. mail, first class postage prepaid, a copy of this
30 Notice, addressed to the tenant, on the _____ day of _____, 19 20 _____.

31 _____
32 (landlord or owner signature)

33 (d) A complaint in substantially the following language shall suffice for the purpose of
34 commencing an eviction action for nonpayment of rent pursuant to section 34-18-35:

35 STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
36 _____, Sc. DISTRICT COURT
37 _____ DIVISION
38 PLAINTIFF DEFENDANT
39 _____
40 (Landlord's Name) (Tenant's Name)
41 _____ V _____
42 _____
43 _____
44 (address) (address of rental premises)

45 COMPLAINT FOR EVICTION

1 FOR NONPAYMENT OF RENT

2 R.I.G.L. 34-18-35

3 1. Plaintiff is the owner/landlord of the rental premises listed above, in which the Defendant
4 Tenant currently resides.

5 2. Defendant is more than ~~fifteen~~ ten days in arrears in rental payments due to the plaintiff from
6 the defendant. The rent is \$_____ per _____, and the amount in arrears is \$_____
7 as of the _____ day of _____, ~~19~~ 20 _____.
8 (month)

9 3. Plaintiff has served the five-day demand notice as required by law, and a copy of that notice is
10 attached to this complaint. The notice was mailed to the defendant on the _____ day of
11 _____, ~~19~~ 20 ____.

12 4. Defendant has not paid the rent in arrears or offered the full amount in arrears, either before or
13 after the demand notice. Defendant remains in possession of the rental premises.

14 WHEREFORE, Plaintiff requests that this Court grant a judgment for possession of the premises
15 (eviction of the tenant) and for back rent in the amount of \$_____, plus costs.

16 _____
17 (Name & address of landlord/owner or attorney for landlord)
18 _____

19 Date complaint
20 filed with clerk _____
21

22 (e) A complaint in substantially the following language shall suffice for the purpose of
23 commencing an eviction action for noncompliance with the rental agreement pursuant to section
24 34-18-36, or an eviction action for unlawfully holding over after expiration or termination of the
25 tenancy pursuant to section 34-18-38:

26 STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE

27 PLANTATIONS

28 _____, Sc. DISTRICT COURT
29 _____ DIVISION
30 PLAINTIFF DEFENDANT

31 _____
32 (Landlord's Name)

31 _____
32 (Tenant's Name)

33 _____ V _____
34 _____

35 (address)

35 (address of rental premises)

36 COMPLAINT FOR EVICTION

37 FOR REASON OTHER THAN

38 NONPAYMENT OF RENT

39 R.I.G.L. 34-18-36

40 R.I.G.L. 34-18-38

41 1. Plaintiff Landlord(s) owns the rental premises listed above, in which the Defendant
42 Tenant(s) resides.

43 2. CHECK ONE:

44 _____ Defendant breached the tenant's obligations under the rented agreement or section 34-18-24
45 as set forth in the attached copy of the notice of noncompliance which was mailed to the

1 defendant. Defendant has not cured or remedied the breach. (Plaintiff must attach copy of
2 required notice of noncompliance.)

3 ____ Defendant has remained in possession of the rented premises following the period set forth
4 in the attached notice of termination of tenancy which was mailed to defendant. (Plaintiff must
5 attach copy of required termination notice.)

6 ____ Defendant breached the tenants' obligations under section 34-18-24(8), (9) or (10).

7 3. Plaintiff seeks judgment for possession of the premises plus judgment in the amount of
8 _____ for _____

9 _____
10 _____
11 _____

12 (explain basis for money claim)

13 Plaintiff seeks costs and fees (if applicable).

14 _____
15 (Signature of Landlord/Owner or Attorney)
16 _____

17 Date complaint filed
18 with clerk _____

19 (f) A complaint in substantially the following language, or in similar language, shall be
20 sufficient for use by landlords or by tenants to bring any claims or causes of action other than
21 eviction actions:

22 NOT FOR EVICTION
23 STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
24 _____, Sc. DISTRICT COURT
25 _____ DIVISION
26 PLAINTIFF DEFENDANT
27 _____
28 (Name) (Name)
29 _____ V _____
30 _____
31 _____
32 (address) (address of rental premises)

33 LANDLORD-TENANT COMPLAINT
34 (NOT FOR USE IN EVICTIONS)

35 1. Plaintiff is the ____ Tenant ____ Landlord/Owner of the rental premises at
36 _____.
37 (address of rental premises)

38 2. Defendant is the ____ Tenant ____ Landlord/Owner.

39 3. Plaintiff claims that defendant has breached the obligations of the rental agreement or
40 law in relation to this landlord-tenant relationship, as follows:

41 _____
42 _____
43 _____

44 (brief description of claim, attach extra sheet, if necessary)

45 4. Plaintiff seeks the following judgment or relief from the Court:

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Date Complaint Filed

With Clerk: _____

(Signature of plaintiff or plaintiff's attorney)

(address)

(g) The summons in an action for eviction for nonpayment of rent pursuant to section 34-18-35 shall be in substantially the following form:

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND
DISTRICT COURT SUMMONS
EVICITION-NONPAYMENT OF RENT
DIVISION COUNTY CIVIL ACTION-FILE NO.

Address of Court:

(name & address of plaintiff- landlord)

(name & address of defendant-tenant)

TO THE TENANT: You are served with an eviction complaint for nonpayment of rent. If you do nothing, you will lose by default and be evicted. If you claim any defense, you must complete the enclosed ANSWER and file it with the Court Clerk at or before the hearing date. You should also mail a copy to the landlord or the landlord's lawyer. Your hearing will be at ~~9:30~~ 9:00 A.M. on the hearing date, at the court address listed above. You should go to the hearing or you may lose by default. If you think the case is "settled," you should still go to the hearing to make sure the settlement is in the court record.

YOUR HEARING DATE IS: _____.

(Proof of Service on next page)

PROOF OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that I served a copy of the Complaint and Summons & Answer upon the defendant(s) by delivering or leaving said papers in the following manner:

_____ to the defendant personally; or

_____ at his or her dwelling unit or usual place of abode at the address listed below with a person of suitable age then residing therein; or

_____ if none be found, by posting conspicuously on the door to the defendant's dwelling unit.

ADDRESS OF DWELLING OR USUAL PLACE OF ABODE:

NAME OF PERSON OF SUITABLE AGE:

SERVICE DATE: _____

DEPUTY SHERIFF/CONSTABLE: _____

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

1 I hereby certify that a copy of this Complaint and Summons was placed into regular U.S.
2 Mail, postage prepaid, on the _____ day of _____, ~~19~~ 20____, addressed to
3 defendant at the following address:

4 _____.

5 _____

6 (Signature of _____ Clerk)

7

8 (h) The summons in an action for eviction for noncompliance with the rental agreement pursuant
9 to section 34-18-36, or for unlawfully holding over after termination or expiration of tenancy
10 pursuant to section 34-18-38, shall be in substantially the following form:

11

12 STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

13 DISTRICT COURT SUMMONS

14 EVICTION FOR REASON OTHER THAN NONPAYMENT OF

15 RENT

16 DIVISION COUNTY CIVIL ACTION-FILE NO.

17 _____

18 Address of Court:

19 _____

20 _____ V _____

21 _____

22 (name & address of plaintiff-landlord) (name & address of defendant-tenant)

23 TO THE TENANT: You are served with an eviction complaint for noncompliance with
24 rental agreement (R.I.G.L. 34-18-36), or for unlawfully holding over after termination or
25 expiration of tenancy (R.I.G.L. 34-18-38). If you do nothing, you will lose by default and be
26 evicted. If you claim any defense, you must complete the enclosed ANSWER and file it with the
27 Court Clerk within TWENTY (20) days after you are served with this summons and complaint.
28 You should also mail a copy of the ANSWER to the landlord or the landlord's lawyer. If you file
29 the enclosed ANSWER, then you will receive another written notice telling you when the hearing
30 will be. If you have any questions, you may consult a lawyer. If you think the case is "settled"
31 you should still file the enclosed ANSWER or be sure that the written settlement is in the file at
32 the Clerk's office.

33 (Proof of Service on next page)

34 _____

35 PROOF OF SERVICE

36 I hereby certify that I served a copy of the Complaint, Summons, and Answer form upon
37 the defendant(s) by delivering or leaving said papers in the following manner:

38 _____ to the defendant personally _____

39 at his/her dwelling unit or usual place of abode at the address listed below, with a person of
40 suitable age then residing therein

41 _____ to an agent named below authorized by appointment or by law to receive service of process

42 _____ further notice as required by law was given as noted below

43 Address of dwelling or usual place of abode:

44 _____

45 Name of person of suitable age or of agent:

46 Service Date: _____

1 Deputy Sheriff/Constable (circle one):

2
3
4

_____ (signature)

5 (i) The summons in an action relating to any claims by tenants, or by landlords other than for
6 eviction, shall be in substantially the following form:

7 STATE OF RHODE ISLAND
8 DISTRICT COURT SUMMONS

9 _____
10 DIVISION COUNTY CIVIL ACTION-FILE NO.

11 _____
12 PLAINTIFF PLAINTIFF'S ATTORNEY

13 _____
14 ADDRESS

15 _____ vs _____

16 DEFENDANT

17 _____
18 DEFENDANT'S ADDRESS

19 _____

20 TO THE ABOVE-NAMED DEFENDANT:

21 You are hereby summoned and required to serve upon the plaintiff's attorney, whose
22 name and address appears above, an answer to the complaint which is herewith served upon you.
23 Your answer must be made within 20 days after service of this summons, excluding the date of
24 service. The original must be filed in writing with this court. If you fail to do so, judgment by
25 default will be taken against you for the relief demanded in the complaint.

26 _____
27 DATE CLERK

28 _____

29 SEAL OF THE DISTRICT COURT DATE RECEIVED

30 _____

31 PROOF OF SERVICE

32 I hereby certify that on the date below I served a copy of this summons and a copy of the
33 complaint received herewith upon the above-named defendant by delivering or leaving said
34 papers in the following manner:

35 _____ to the defendant personally.

36 _____ at his dwelling house or usual place of abode at the address entered below, with a person
37 of suitable age and discretion then residing therewith.

38 _____ to an agent named below authorized by appoint- ment or by law to receive service of
39 process.

40 _____ Further notice as required by statute was given as noted on the reverse side.

41 _____

42 Address of Dwelling or Usual Place of Abode

43 _____

44 Name of Authorized Agent or Person of Suitable Age

45 _____

46 Date Deputy Sheriff/Constable

47 _____

48 SERVICE FEE \$ _____

1 (j) The blank answer served in eviction actions shall be in substantially the following form:

2 STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
3 _____, Sc. DISTRICT COURT
4 _____ DIVISION
5 PLAINTIFF DEFENDANT
6 _____
7 (Landlord's Name) (Tenant's Name)
8 V
9 _____
10 (address) (address of rental premises)

11 INSTRUCTIONS TO THE DEFENDANT

12 Listed below are several possible defenses to the eviction action your landlord has filed
13 against you. If one or more of these defenses apply to your case, check the appropriate box(es). If
14 space is provided, write in facts in support of that defense. Use additional paper if necessary.
15 Some of these defenses are technical, and there may be others not listed here. You may consult a
16 lawyer and seek representation before filling out this Answer.

17 TENANT'S ANSWER

- 18 () The complaint against me is untrue or fails to state the following facts:
- 19 () I offered rent, but my landlord refused it. I am still able and willing to pay the rent. I
- 20 () I have a defense for nonpayment because the landlord has failed to maintain the premises in a
21 fit and habitable condition.
- 22 () My rent has not been paid, but I have a legally justifiable defense for not paying:
- 23 () I have a written lease which does not expire until:
- 24 () I have not received the required notice from the landlord before this complaint was served on
25 me.
- 26 () The landlord is trying to evict me because I have exercised my legal rights by calling code
27 enforcement officials, or by taking the following protected action:
- 28 () I have other defenses as follow:

29 WHEREFORE: Because of the defense(s) indicated above, I ask the court to grant a
30 judgment in my favor and not order me to be evicted.

31 COUNTERCLAIM

32 Instructions: If you believe you are entitled to be awarded damages or money for any
33 reason from your landlord, you may fill out the statement below:

34 I hereby sue my landlord for the amount of \$_____.

35 I believe I am entitled to receive an award of this amount because
36 _____
37 _____

1 Name of Defendant (or attorney) Signature of Defendant

2 _____

3 _____

4 Address

5 _____

6 Telephone number

7

8 SECTION 2. Section 34-18-50 of the General Laws in Chapter 34-18 entitled "Residential
9 Landlord and Tenant Act" is hereby repealed:

10 ~~34-18-50. Payment of moving costs required. -- Whenever the personal property of any~~
11 ~~tenant is removed from the premises the tenant occupies by mandate of an execution from the~~
12 ~~court of competent jurisdiction, the tenant shall pay the entire amount of the cost of moving the~~
13 ~~personal property and any prepaid storage charges to the sheriff, constable, or other person who~~
14 ~~lawfully caused the personal property to be so moved before the personal property can be~~
15 ~~released to the tenant by the person, firm, partnership, company, association, or corporation~~
16 ~~having lawful possession of the property. Further, the sheriff, constable, or other person who~~
17 ~~lawfully caused the personal property to be so moved shall prepare and deliver a release in~~
18 ~~writing stating that the costs of moving and any prepaid storage charges have been paid in full~~
19 ~~and authorizing the release of the personal property to the tenant. This amount shall be paid to the~~
20 ~~landlord as reimbursement for the costs of removing the personal property.~~

21 SECTION 3. Chapter 34-18-48.1 in Chapter 34-18 of the General Laws entitled
22 "Residential Landlord and Tenant Act" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following
23 section:

24 34-18-48.1. Service of Possession Execution -. – Notwithstanding any general or public
25 law to the contrary, all executions for possession, issued pursuant to this chapter, shall be served
26 as soon as possible. Tenants, who continue to remain on the premises, after they have been served
27 with an execution for possession, shall be deemed criminal trespassers in violation of section 11-
28 44-26. Any possessions of the tenant(s) that remain on the premises, after service of a possession
29 execution shall be deemed forfeited and subject to be removed by the landlord, without the
30 assistance of a constable or sheriff and without the need to be stored.

31 SECTION 4. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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LC00077
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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
A N A C T
RELATING TO PROPERTY - RESIDENTIAL LANDLORD TENANT ACT

1 This act would allow a landlord who has a tenant that is more than ten (10) days in
2 arrears in rent, as opposed to the current fifteen (15) days, to send a letter to the tenant giving
3 them five (5) more days to pay their rent before filing a complaint for eviction. It would abolish
4 the landlord's current obligation to physically remove tenants and store their possessions, after
5 they have been served by a court possession execution by a sheriff or constable.

6 This act would take effect upon passage.

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