

STATE OF NEW YORK

4281

2019-2020 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

March 6, 2019

Introduced by Sen. BIAGGI -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Judiciary

AN ACT to amend the real property law, in relation to the termination of a residential lease by a victim of domestic violence; and to repeal certain provisions of such law relating thereto

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. Section 227-c of the real property law is REPEALED and a
2 new section 227-c is added to read as follows:

3 § 227-c. Termination of residential lease by victims of domestic
4 violence. 1. Lease or rental agreement. In any lease or rental agree-
5 ment covering premises occupied for dwelling purposes, where a tenant or
6 a member of the tenant's household is a victim of domestic violence as
7 defined by section four hundred fifty-nine-a of the social services law
8 and reasonably fears remaining in the leasehold premises because of
9 potential further domestic violence, such tenant shall be permitted to
10 terminate such lease or rental agreement and quit and surrender
11 possession of the leasehold premises and the land so leased or occupied
12 pursuant to the provisions of this section and to be released from any
13 liability to pay to the lessor or owner, rent or other payments in lieu
14 of rent for the time subsequent to the date of termination of such lease
15 in accordance with subdivision two of this section.

16 2. Lease termination procedure. (a) A tenant who meets the require-
17 ments in subdivision one of this section may terminate his or her lease
18 by notice in writing delivered to the lessor or owner of the premises
19 occupied by such person, or to the lessor's or owner's agent, and to any
20 co-tenants of such lessee or tenant other than the perpetrator of domes-
21 tic violence. The notice shall specify the termination date which shall
22 be no earlier than thirty days after such notice is delivered. If the
23 notice is mailed via first class mail, it shall be deemed delivered five
24 days after mailing. If the tenant asserts that the lessor or owner is

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 the perpetrator of domestic violence, a person authorized by the tenant
2 may deliver such notice on the tenant's behalf.

3 (b) Such notice shall state that the tenant or a member of the
4 tenant's household has experienced domestic violence and reasonably
5 believes he or she, or the member of the tenant's household, is unable
6 to safely remain in the leased premises as a result of the domestic
7 violence.

8 (c) Within twenty-five days of such notice, the tenant shall provide
9 documentation demonstrating that the tenant or a member of the tenant's
10 household has been a victim of domestic violence as described in subdi-
11 vision one of this section. This documentation may include any one or
12 more of the following:

13 (i) A temporary or final order of protection issued by a court of
14 competent jurisdiction;

15 (ii) A record, complaint, or report from a federal, state, or local
16 law enforcement agency of an act of domestic violence as described in
17 section four hundred fifty-nine-a of the social services law or a family
18 offense as described in section eight hundred twelve of the family court
19 act, or certifying that the tenant or a member of the tenant's household
20 has been subjected to domestic violence;

21 (iii) A record from a health care provider for treatment related to
22 domestic violence as described in section four hundred fifty-nine-a of
23 the social services law or a family offense as described in section
24 eight hundred twelve of the family court act;

25 (iv) A written verification from any other qualified third party to
26 whom the tenant, or a member of the tenant's household reported the
27 domestic violence.

28 (A) "Qualified third party" shall include: any law enforcement offi-
29 cer; employee of a court of the state; attorney, physician, psychia-
30 trist, psychologist, social worker, registered nurse, therapist, or
31 clinical professional counselor licensed to practice in any state;
32 person employed by a government or non-profit agency or service that
33 advises or provides services to persons regarding domestic violence; or
34 any member of the clergy of a church or religious society or denomi-
35 nation.

36 (B) Written verification as described herein shall be satisfied by any
37 sworn or notarized statement including the required information.

38 (C) The following sample form shall satisfy the verification require-
39 ments but is not required. This sample form shall be posted to the New
40 York state unified court system's website, and shall be made available
41 in the state's family, civil, housing, criminal, and supreme courts:

42 Part I. Tenant/Legal Occupant Statement

43 I, (insert name of tenant), state as follows:

44 (Choose the next part (A, B, or C) that most accurately describes your
45 situation)

46 (A) I have been subject to domestic violence. Date(s) of recent
47 incident(s) happened on or about:

48 (B) A member of my household has been subject to domestic violence.
49 Date(s) of recent incident(s) happened on or about:

(C) Both I and at least one member of my household have been subject to domestic violence. Date(s) of recent incident(s) happened on or about:

The person I have asserted has perpetrated domestic violence is my co-tenant, and I cannot safely give notice of my termination to my co-tenant. (YES/NO)

I reasonably fear that I cannot safely remain in my current apartment. I hereby terminate my lease effective (date at least thirty days after the next rent payment is due).

(signature of tenant)

(date)

Acknowledgement

State of _____)
_____)ss.:

County of _____)

On the _____ day of _____ in the year _____, before me, the undersigned notary public, personally appeared _____, personally known to me or proved to me on the basis of satisfactory evidence to be the individual(s) whose name(s) is (are) subscribed to the within instrument and acknowledged to me that he/she/they executed the same in his/her/their capacity(ies), and that by his/her/their signature(s) on the instrument, the individual(s), or the person upon behalf of which the individual(s) acted, executed the instrument.

Notary Public

Part II. Qualified Third Party Statement

I, (insert name of qualified third party), state as follows:

My employer name/address/phone number/e-mail address are as follows:

I am:

A law enforcement officer employed by the (insert law enforcement agency).

An employee of _____ court located in the state of _____.

An attorney licensed to practice in (insert name of state(s)).

A physician licensed to practice in (insert name of state(s)).

A psychiatrist licensed to practice in (insert name of state(s)).

A psychologist licensed to practice in (insert name of state(s)).

A social worker licensed to practice in (insert name of state(s)).

A nurse licensed to practice in (insert name of state(s)).

A therapist or clinical professional counselor licensed to practice in (insert name of state(s));

1 Employed by a government or non-profit agency or service that
2 advises persons regarding domestic violence or refers them to
3 persons or agencies for services or advice.

4 A member of the clergy of a church or religious society or denomi-
5 nation.

6 Other (describe):

7 The person who signed the Tenant/Legal Occupant Statement above has
8 stated to me that he or she, or a member of his or her household, has
9 been subject to domestic violence.

10 This person further stated to me the incident(s) occurred on or about
11 the date(s) stated above.

12 I understand that the person who signed the Tenant/Legal Occupant State-
13 ment may use this document as a basis for terminating a lease with the
14 person's lessor.

15 _____
16 (name of qualified third party)

17 _____
18 (signature of qualified third party)

19 _____
20 (date)

21 Acknowledgement

22 State of _____)
23 _____)ss.:
24 County of _____)

25 On the _____ day of _____ in the year _____ , before me, the
26 undersigned _____ notary _____ public, _____ personally _____ appeared
27 _____ , personally known to me or proved to me on the
28 basis of satisfactory evidence to be the individual(s) whose name(s) is
29 (are) subscribed to the within instrument and acknowledged to me that
30 he/she/they executed the same in his/her/their capacity(ies), and that
31 by his/her/their signature(s) on the instrument, the individual(s), or
32 the person upon behalf of which the individual(s) acted, executed the
33 instrument.

34 _____
35 Notary Public

36 Part III. Statement of Interpretation/Translation

37 I am bilingual in English and _____ and have translated or inter-
38 preted this document to the best of my ability for the signer above.

1 _____
2 (name of interpreter/translator)

3 _____
4 (signature of interpreter/translator)

5 _____
6 (date)

7 Acknowledgement

8 State of _____)
9)ss.:
10 County of _____)

11 On the _____ day of _____ in the year _____, before me, the
12 undersigned notary public, personally appeared _____,
13 personally known to me or proved to me on the basis of satisfactory
14 evidence to be the individual(s) whose name(s) is (are) subscribed to
15 the within instrument and acknowledged to me that he/she/they executed
16 the same in his/her/their capacity(ies), and that by his/her/their
17 signature(s) on the instrument, the individual(s), or the person upon
18 behalf of which the individual(s) acted, executed the instrument.

19 _____
20 Notary Public

21 3. Treatment of rent. (a) The tenant terminating the lease shall pay
22 rent, pro-rata, up to the lease termination date pursuant to this
23 section.

24 (b) The tenant terminating the lease shall be entitled to a refund for
25 any prepaid rent or other payments covering the period after the effec-
26 tive date of the lease termination, as long as the tenant has vacated
27 the premises. Such refund shall be provided within ten days of delivery
28 of the written notice as outlined in subdivision two of this section.

29 (c) A tenant who meets the requirements in subdivision one of this
30 section and submits proper notice pursuant to subdivision two of this
31 section shall have a defense in any action brought by a landlord against
32 such tenant to recover rent and/or damages for breach of lease and shall
33 not be liable for any rent after the effective termination date.

34 (d) The lessor or owner may withhold a security deposit in part or in
35 full to the extent allowed by the lease or statute, except for the early
36 termination granted by this section, and shall not withhold any part of
37 the security deposit due to the tenant's exercise of rights under this
38 section.

39 (e) Nothing in this section shall be construed to be a defense against
40 an action for rent for a period of time before the tenant vacated the
41 premises and gave notice as required in subdivision two of this section.

42 4. Co-tenants and other occupants. Upon termination:

43 (a) If the terminating tenant is the sole leaseholder, the premises
44 shall be delivered to the lessor or owner:

45 (i) free of all tenants and occupants, provided that the terminating
46 tenant shall not be responsible for ensuring that the abusive household
47 member is not present; and

1 (ii) in accordance with the terms of the lease relating to delivery of
2 the premises at the termination of the lease.

3 (b) If there are tenants on the lease other than the terminating
4 tenant:

5 (i) the landlord shall not, except upon consent of such additional
6 tenants, terminate or sever the co-tenancy. The landlord must provide
7 the remaining tenant at least thirty days from the termination date to
8 decide whether to consent to a termination or severance.

9 (ii) The remaining co-tenant or co-tenants hold the right to add an
10 additional occupant as defined by paragraph (b) of subdivision one of
11 section two hundred thirty-five-f of this article.

12 5. Confidentiality provisions. (a) Unless the terminating tenant
13 provides written authorization for the release of information or unless
14 required by law, court order, or statute, the information shall not be
15 released. Information that shall be kept confidential shall include
16 information obtained during the process of the tenant terminating his or
17 her lease in accordance with this section, such as: (i) the nature of
18 the termination, (ii) the status of the tenant or member of the tenant's
19 household as a victim of domestic violence, and (iii) any information
20 contained in documentation provided to demonstrate status as a victim of
21 domestic violence.

22 (b) Pursuant to this section, the landlord shall not divulge,
23 describe, or characterize the termination of the rental agreement as an
24 early termination by a current lessor to a prospective lessor or any
25 third party.

26 6. Violations. (a) Landlords who knowingly, or intentionally violate
27 any part of this section may be liable for liquidated damages, not to
28 exceed one thousand dollars, actual damages, costs and attorneys' fees.

29 (b) Any agreement by a lessee or tenant of premises occupied for
30 dwelling purposes waiving or modifying his or her rights as set forth in
31 this section shall be void as contrary to public policy.

32 § 2. This act shall take effect immediately.