

## KNOW YOUR RIGHTS: CALIFORNIA TENANTS & IMMIGRATION STATUS

California law protects **ALL** tenants—regardless of immigration or citizenship status. This includes people who are undocumented, people perceived to be undocumented, and people associated with them (like family members or roommates). Here's what you need to know:

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### YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO SAFE, STABLE HOUSING

**Landlords CANNOT:** - Ask about your immigration or citizenship status - Demand a Social Security number, visa, green card, or other immigration documents - Require that you sign any document or make any statement about your immigration status - Threaten to report you, your family members, or anyone associated with you to immigration or law enforcement

**Landlords MUST NOT:** - Harass, intimidate, or threaten you in an effort to make you move out - Enter your home without proper notice, except in true emergencies - Shut off utilities, change the locks, or remove doors or windows to force you out

These actions are illegal under California law, regardless of your immigration status.

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### IF YOU STAND UP FOR YOUR RIGHTS, LANDLORDS CAN'T RETALIATE

You're protected from retaliation if you: - Report code violations or poor housing conditions - Join or organize with a tenant union - File a complaint or take legal action to protect your rights

**Retaliation is illegal for 180 days** after any of these actions. Retaliation includes: - Raising your rent - Decreasing your services - Threatening eviction - Reporting (or threatening to report) you to immigration

You can sue for actual damages and up to **\$2,000 per retaliatory act**, plus attorney's fees.

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### YOU CAN TAKE LEGAL ACTION

If your landlord violates your rights, you can: - File a lawsuit and seek **injunctions** to stop illegal behavior - Recover **financial penalties** and damages - File complaints through legal aid or a nonprofit on your behalf

If your landlord reports you to immigration **to scare you or make you move out**, the court can: - Fine them **6–12 times your monthly rent** - Order them to stop - Notify the District Attorney for further investigation

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## IMMIGRATION STATUS IS NOT A REASON TO EVICT

Landlords **cannot evict you** based on: - Not having a Social Security number - Not showing a driver's license or passport - A suspicion about your immigration status

Even if you're not on the lease, if the landlord approved you to live there and then tries to evict you using your status, the court will assume they are doing so illegally unless they prove otherwise.

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## IMMIGRATION STATUS USUALLY CAN'T BE USED IN COURT

In housing-related court cases, landlords **cannot ask about or use your immigration status**, unless: - You raise it yourself as part of your defense, **and** - They show it's absolutely necessary under federal law

Just defending your right to stay is **not** a reason for immigration status to come up.

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## EXCEPTIONS (WHEN LANDLORDS CAN ASK ABOUT DOCUMENTS)

Landlords **can** ask for identity or financial documents **only** to: - Verify income or credit when considering a rental application - Comply with **federal rental assistance programs**, court orders, or legal subpoenas

They **cannot** use this as a way to get around the law or to intimidate you.

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## NEED HELP?

If your landlord is threatening, harassing, or trying to evict you because of immigration status, contact: - Your local **Legal Aid** organization - A **tenants' rights nonprofit** - An **immigration advocacy group**

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**YOU ARE PROTECTED.** You have the right to live free from fear, harassment, and discrimination in your home—no matter your immigration status.