

Resist Revolt Tenant Organizing Toolkit: Phoenix Metro

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Why organize

Tenants who act together win things no single renter can: repairs, fair fees, fewer evictions and a landlord who has to listen. This toolkit is for anyone renting in the Phoenix metro (Phoenix, Mesa, Tempe, Glendale, Chandler and beyond) who wants to organize their building or neighborhood. You don't need to be part of Resist Revolt or any group to use it.

The pandemic emergency is over, but the pressure on renters isn't. Rents across the Valley rose sharply after 2020, eviction filings in Maricopa County stay high, and Arizona law bars cities from passing rent control (A.R.S. § 33-1329). That leaves organizing as one of the strongest tools renters have.

You have a legal right to organize. Arizona law forbids landlords from retaliating against you for organizing or joining a tenants' union (A.R.S. § 33-1381).

How to use it: read the rights section first, research your landlord, then follow the organizing steps in order. Templates are at the end; make a copy and adapt them.

Questions or want support? Contact Resist Revolt at [EMAIL / WEBSITE].

This toolkit adapts work by the Kansas City Tenants Union, the Philadelphia Tenants Union and Phoenix's Worried About Rent. We're grateful for their work.

Disclaimer: This is general information, not legal advice. Talk to a lawyer about your specific situation.

Know your rights

Arizona renters are covered by the [Arizona Residential Landlord and Tenant Act](#) (A.R.S. Title 33, Chapter 10). The table covers the rules organizers get asked about most, current as of October 2026.

Right	What the law says	Statute
Organizing	Landlord can't raise rent, cut services or threaten eviction because you organized, joined a tenants' union or reported code violations. A complaint within 6 months before the landlord's action creates a presumption of retaliation.	§ 33-1381
Livable home	Landlord must keep the unit fit and habitable and follow building codes: working plumbing, heat, cooling, electricity, trash service, no infestations.	§ 33-1324
Repairs	Give written notice. If the landlord doesn't fix a health or safety problem, you can end the lease after 5 days (10 days for other material problems), or sue for damages.	§ 33-1361
Repair and deduct	For smaller repairs, after 10 days' written notice you may hire a licensed contractor and deduct the cost, up to \$300 or half a month's rent, whichever is more. Follow the steps exactly.	§ 33-1363
Lockouts and shutoffs	Landlord can't lock you out or cut utilities without a court order. You can recover up to 2 months' rent or twice your actual damages, whichever is more.	§ 33-1367
Deposits	Capped at 1.5 months' rent. Landlord must return it with an itemized list within 14 days (excluding weekends and holidays) after you move out and request it. Wrongful withholding can cost them double.	§ 33-1321

Right	What the law says	Statute
Entry and privacy	Landlord must give 2 days' notice and enter at reasonable times, except emergencies.	§ 33-1343
Discrimination	Federal and state fair housing law bans discrimination by race, color, religion, sex, national origin, familial status or disability. Phoenix and Tucson also ban discrimination based on source of income, such as Section 8 vouchers or Social Security.	Fair Housing Act; Phoenix ordinance
Rental tax	Since January 1, 2025, Arizona cities can't charge sales tax on residential rent. If your landlord still adds it, you can sue.	KJZZ

How eviction notices work

An eviction ("special detainer") must go through a Justice Court. Notice periods are short, so act fast ([§ 33-1368](#)):

- **Unpaid rent:** 5 days to pay before the landlord can file. Late fees are allowed only if reasonable and written in the lease.
- **Health or safety violation:** 5 days to fix it.
- **Other lease violation:** 10 days to fix it.
- **"Material and irreparable" breach** (such as violence or drug sales): immediate termination, no cure period.

Before the landlord files, you can usually stop a nonpayment eviction by paying all past-due rent plus the late fee. **Never skip your court date.** Missing it almost always means losing by default.

Getting started

Organizing starts with two things: knowing who really owns your building, and talking to your neighbors.

Research your landlord

Many Valley rentals are owned by out-of-state investors or corporate landlords hiding behind LLCs, with a local company managing day to day. Find the real owner before you pick a target. Use the [Landlord Research Worksheet](#) to track what you find.

- **Maricopa County Assessor** (mcassessor.maricopa.gov): search your address to find the owner or LLC, then search that owner's name to find their other properties. Pinal County renters use the Pinal County Assessor.
- **Arizona Corporation Commission** (ecorp.azcc.gov): look up the LLC to find its members, managers and statutory agent.
- **Justice Court case search** (justicecourts.maricopa.gov): search the owner or LLC for eviction filings and lawsuits. No filings doesn't mean no evictions; some landlords push people out informally, which is illegal.
- **City code complaints**: check for past violations and file new ones. In Phoenix, use [Neighborhood Services code compliance](#) or myPHX311; other cities have their own code enforcement offices.
- **Reviews and social media**: Google, Yelp, Facebook and LinkedIn for the landlord and the management company. Reviews from other properties show patterns.
- **Property managers**: sometimes a good source of information, since corporate owners often treat them badly too. Be careful what you share.

Organizing steps

1. **Relationship map.** Who do you know? Who do people go to for help? Note the natural leaders and hubs in your building.
2. **Canvass.** Knock doors, leave flyers or letters, and use group chats to reach other tenants, including at the landlord's other properties. Get contact info and invite people to a one-on-one or a meeting.
3. **One-on-ones.** Deepen relationships and learn what each person cares about (see below).
4. **Tenant meeting.** Bring people together to share issues, set demands, name a target and agree to act as a group.
5. **List management.** Keep a list of names, units, contact info, issues and how committed each person is. Update it after every conversation.
6. **Action.** Escalate together with tactics that move your target.

One-on-ones

One-on-ones are the most important organizing tool. The goal is a real conversation about someone's life, values and housing, not an interview. Listen more than you talk.

1. **Intro:** who you are and why you reached out.
2. **Their story:** where they're from, work, family, what matters to them. Share about yourself too.
3. **Issues:** what's wrong in the unit or building, and how it affects them.
4. **Agitation:** do they deserve better? Who has the power to change it?
5. **Vision:** what would winning look like? Compare one person emailing the landlord with a letter signed by the whole building.
6. **The ask:** will they come to a meeting and stand with their neighbors?
7. **Inoculation:** prepare them for the landlord's response. Expect **divide and conquer** (special deals for individuals, surprise that anything's wrong, small concessions) and **intimidation** (threats about repairs, nonrenewal or eviction). Retaliation is illegal, but it still happens. Being ready makes people less likely to fold.
8. **Follow-up:** who else should you talk to? Confirm the meeting date and time.

Safety and privacy

- Use a group email or account for all landlord contact so no single organizer is targeted.
- Use encrypted group chats such as Signal, and be careful who gets added.
- Keep copies of every notice, lease, repair request and photo, with dates.
- Some neighbors may face extra risk from immigration status or past evictions. Let people choose how visible they want to be, and never share someone's information without consent.

Building a tenant union

A tenant union is an organization run by tenants to fight for shared interests. It can be one building, every property owned by one landlord, or a whole neighborhood of renters with different landlords.

Where to meet

Meet in person when you can: a unit, a courtyard, a community room, a library or a nearby church. In summer, plan around the heat with evening meetings, shade and water. For people who can't attend, run a hybrid option with Zoom, Google Meet or a phone conference line, and use a group chat (Signal or WhatsApp) between meetings. Know who's on every call, especially once you're planning strategy.

Running good meetings

- **Clear agenda:** every meeting needs a purpose, desired outcomes and a start and end time. Bad meetings drive people away.
- **Reminders:** remind people, then remind them again.
- **Shared roles:** facilitator, notetaker, timekeeper, translator. People who do tasks stay invested.
- **Language access:** many Valley buildings are bilingual. Offer interpretation and translate materials, especially into Spanish.
- **Mapping:** draw your property. Who have you talked to? Who still needs a conversation?
- **Shared decisions:** people who help plan an action show up for it.
- **Follow-up:** thank people, share notes, check in on those who missed it and hold each other to commitments.

Demands

Good demands are specific, name who can grant them, have a deadline and are shared by the group. Examples:

- Fix the AC, plumbing or pest problem in all units within 14 days
- Remove or cap junk fees ("admin," "amenity," "tech" fees)
- Limit this year's rent increase or freeze it
- Remove the city rental tax from rent, as required since 2025
- Recognize the tenant union and meet with it
- No retaliation against organizers
- 48 hours' notice before entry

Target and power analysis

Your target is the person with the power to grant your demands, often the owner rather than the on-site manager. Ask:

- What does the target want, and what are they afraid of?
- Who influences them: investors, lenders, city council members, faith leaders, the press?
- What pressure will move them: public, political or financial?

Your landlord research answers many of these questions.

Taking action

Plan your escalation before you send the first letter: what will you do if the landlord ignores you, or retaliates? Starting with a smaller step and escalating together builds confidence and unity.

Before picking a tactic, ask:

- Will it move the target toward our demands?
- Is it visible to the landlord or to people the landlord cares about?
- Are enough people ready to do it?
- Will it unify us and feel powerful?
- How will management react, and how will we protect each other?

A sample escalation ladder

1. Meet as a small group and agree on demands.
2. Collect signatures on a demand letter and deliver it together, with a deadline.
3. Flood the landlord with repair requests and file code complaints for documented problems.
4. Go public: a union social media page, an online petition, signs in windows.
5. Bring in allies: your city council member, faith leaders or community groups write letters or join a meeting.
6. Hold a call-in or email day to the owner, management company and investors.
7. Contact the media and hold a press conference or rally at the property or the owner's office.
8. Consider a rent strike or other collective escalation.

For more ideas, see the [Autonomous Tenants Union tactics handbook](#).

Rent strikes

A rent strike is when tenants collectively withhold rent, even though they could pay it, to win a demand. It's a powerful tactic and a risky one, especially in Arizona.

Know the Arizona risk. State law doesn't allow withholding rent except through specific legal remedies, like repair-and-deduct. A landlord can serve a 5-day notice and file for eviction, and Arizona evictions move fast. **Talk to a lawyer before any rent strike.** A common, safer route is to pay rent into a shared escrow account so the money is ready if the court requires it.

Before escalating to a rent strike, have you:

- ☐ Built a tenant union with real relationships?
- ☐ Tried collective negotiation with the landlord?
- ☐ Had one-on-ones with every tenant under this landlord, including at other properties if your building is small?
- ☐ Presented clear demands the landlord refused?
- ☐ Gotten commitments from a supermajority (75%+) of tenants?
- ☐ Lined up a lawyer and a backup plan if the strike fails?

If your building is the landlord's only property, negotiation is usually a better bet than a strike.

Individual deals hurt everyone. A landlord may offer one tenant a private deal. Follow the group's agreement about landlord contact, and tell the union before talking to the landlord alone.

Press and social media

Public pressure can force a response. Before pitching reporters, ask whether your story is newsworthy: a particularly bad situation, a well-known or corporate landlord, or something that matters citywide.

- **Press list:** track reporters who cover housing at outlets like ABC15, 12News, KJZZ, Arizona Republic/azcentral, Phoenix New Times, Cronkite News, Axios Phoenix, Arizona Mirror and Telemundo/Univision Arizona, with email, phone and social handles.
- **Advisory vs. release:** send an advisory at least 24 hours before an action; send a release right after. Emailing or messaging reporters directly also works.

- **Spokespeople:** pick prepared people who can explain who you are and what you want. Anyone can ask to speak "on background" or to have their name changed, and nobody has to answer every question.
- **Social media:** Instagram, Facebook, TikTok and X can recruit tenants and drive call-ins. Share a clear issue, the landlord's contact info and a short script.

Case study: Crestwood Tenants Union

In 2019, tenants at Crestwood Apartments in Kansas City, Kansas, organized against an out-of-state landlord that left units with mold, roaches and broken HVAC. They held one-on-ones with almost every tenant, delivered demands, and filled a courtroom when the property went into foreclosure. When an anonymous buyer tried to purchase the complex, the union used its legal standing to block the sale until the buyer agreed to its demands. In February 2020, the buyer accepted them all: repairs within 30 days, forgiveness of all past-due rent, ongoing maintenance and the right to pursue the old owner. (Story from KC Tenants.)

Phoenix-metro resources

Phone numbers and programs change often; confirm before sharing widely.

Need	Resource	Contact
Free eviction legal help (Maricopa County, nonpayment)	Community Legal Services: rights info, advice and court representation	602-385-8880 · Maricopa County page
Rent or deposit help	Maricopa County Rental Assistance	602-506-0589 · maricopa.gov
Code violations (Phoenix)	Neighborhood Services code compliance	phoenix.gov code compliance or myPHX311
Eviction court cases	Maricopa County Justice Courts	justicecourts.maricopa.gov
Property ownership	Maricopa County Assessor	mcassessor.maricopa.gov
LLC lookups	Arizona Corporation Commission	ecorp.azcc.gov

Need	Resource	Contact
The law itself	Arizona Residential Landlord and Tenant Act	azleg.gov
Fair housing complaints	HUD Office of Fair Housing; Arizona Attorney General Civil Rights Division	hud.gov/fairhousing · azag.gov
Organizing support	Resist Revolt	[EMAIL / WEBSITE]

Templates

Copy these and replace anything in [BRACKETS].

Landlord research worksheet

Property owner	Property	Other
Who is the owner?	How many units?	Which city council district?
What kind of owner? (local, out of state, corporate, public housing)	What type of property? (single family, complex, high rise)	Is there another decision-maker to target? (city, HUD, a nonprofit)
Does the owner manage it or hire a management company?	Market rate, income-restricted or vouchers?	Is the neighborhood gentrifying?
Any court filings involving the owner?	Any public funding? (tax incentives, HUD, federal loans)	Any news stories about the owner or property?
How many evictions do they file a year, and over how much?	What issues are documented? What do reviews say?	Who owns nearby properties?
Does the owner belong to landlord associations?	High turnover or long-term tenants?	Could organizing here build tenant power citywide?

Property owner	Property	Other
Is the owner powerful or influential?	Who are the tenants? (languages, families, students, seniors)	
Do we need to organize more than one property?	Are other units accessible, or are buildings locked?	

Tenant union meeting agenda

Purpose: get to know each other, talk about our housing and plan how to support each other. **Outcome:** a plan to organize and get our landlord to meet our needs.

1. **Intros (15 min):** How long have you lived here? What's going on with your unit? What support do you need?
2. **Demands (15 min):** What do we want? What would make things better? Who can draft a demand letter?
3. **Target (15 min):** Who can meet our demands? What do we know and not know about them? Which tactics will move them? Who will research and take notes?
4. **Agreements and next steps (10 min):** Do we want to form a tenant union? How will we make decisions? Who does what? When is the next meeting?
5. **Evaluation (5 min):** one word from everyone on how they feel; space to name worries without needing to resolve them.

Letter to landlord

To the owners and management of [PROPERTY NAME / COMPANY]:

We, the residents of [PROPERTY ADDRESS], have formed the [TENANT UNION NAME] to work together for safe, affordable and dignified housing.

Here are the conditions we are facing:

- [e.g. Broken air conditioning in [#] units during summer heat]
- [e.g. Repair requests ignored for [#] weeks]
- [e.g. New fees added without explanation]
- [OTHER ISSUES]

We ask that [LANDLORD / COMPANY]:

- Recognize our tenant union and meet with our representatives
- [Complete these repairs by [DATE]]
- [Remove these fees / limit rent increases to [X]%)
- [Remove city rental tax from rent, as required by Arizona law since 2025]
- Take no retaliation against any tenant for organizing (A.R.S. § 33-1381)
- [OTHER DEMAND]

Please respond in writing to [UNION EMAIL] by [DATE].

Signed,
[NAME, UNIT #] (as many neighbors as possible)

Tip: send this and all other landlord communication from a union email account so individual organizers aren't singled out.

Press advisory (send 24+ hours before an action)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[DATE]

Media contact: [NAME, PHONE, EMAIL]

[HEADLINE, e.g. TENANTS AT [PROPERTY] DEMAND REPAIRS FROM [LANDLORD]]

[CITY], AZ – [1-2 short paragraphs on the issue and why tenants are acting]

The union is demanding that [LANDLORD] take the following actions:
[DEMANDS]

WHAT: [e.g. Press conference / delivery of demands]

WHO: [TENANT UNION, SPEAKERS]

WHEN: [DATE AND TIME]

WHERE: [ADDRESS]

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[About the union: who you are, when you formed, how many tenants, what you're building.]

Press release (send right after an action)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[DATE]

Media contact: [NAME, PHONE, EMAIL]

[HEADLINE, e.g. [PROPERTY] TENANTS DELIVER DEMANDS TO [LANDLORD]]

[CITY], AZ – [1-2 short paragraphs on what happened and why]

The union is demanding that [LANDLORD] take the following actions:

[DEMANDS]

"[QUOTE FROM A TENANT – can be anonymous]"

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[About the union]