



Oregon anti-discrimination law means landlords can no longer advertise 'No Section 8'

tina kotek sine die 7.8.13.JPG

House Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Portland laughs at an end-of-session video of funny moments from the 2013 legislative session where her anti-discrimination housing bill passed. (*Michael Lloyd/The Oregonian*)

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Beginning today, Oregon landlords are no longer allowed to turn down prospective renters simply because they receive rent subsidies from the federal Section 8 program.

Judging from the rental advertisements on Craigslist, however, not everyone has gotten the message.

There's the **large 1 bedroom unit in North Portland**, the **classic one-bedroom apartment in the Lloyd District**, the **three-bedroom ranch home in east Portland**, the **historic old-world Portland home in inner Southeast**.

Each advertisement from June is still listed online as available for rent – with the caveat, "No Section 8."

"They definitely should not be allowed to do that," said Jared Mason-Gere, a spokesman for House Speaker Tina Kotek, who sponsored the anti-discrimination legislation.

Last year, Kotek, D-North Portland, **pushed through a bill** that prevents landlords from discriminating against renters simply because they use a Section 8 voucher to pay for a unit. **The law** took effect Tuesday.

Kotek pushed for changes hoping more low-income renters would have a better selection of housing options. Section 8 recipients generally pay about 30 percent of their income toward housing, with the voucher covering the rest. But it's up to the voucher-holder to find a landlord willing to participate in the program.

In 2012, The Oregonian found that **Section 8 voucher use had surged in east Portland** over a decade while it dipped in gentrifying neighborhoods, leaving dwindling options in the central city.

Anti-discrimination protections already prohibit landlords from rejecting applicants because of race, color, national origin, familial status, marital status, sex, sexual orientation or religion.

Kotek's law expanded the protections to include source of income, specifically the Section 8 program, also known as the Housing Choice Voucher program. Even with the change, landlords can still reject a Section 8 application for other reasons, such as past conduct.

The Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries will investigate complaints filed by people who believe they've faced unlawful discrimination. Landlords found in violation are subject to a fine of up to \$11,000.

"A landlord may not advertise 'no Section 8 renters' and be in compliance with Oregon civil rights law," Charlie Burr, a spokesman for the agency, said in an email. "Any Oregonian seeking a rental house or apartment may file a civil rights complaint with our agency alleging unlawful discrimination based on a rental posting."

The new law also sets aside state money to reimburse landlords for damage caused by Section 8 tenants, up to \$5,000. The housing authority serving Portland has a similar fund; it's hardly been used.

-- Brad Schmidt

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