

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO NOW?

STAY PUT.

It's their profits, but it's our lives. Landlords may use official-looking documentation to intimidate us, hire professionals to harass us, and tell us lies about accepting cash for keys. You can take your time to get the facts before you respond to any offer.

TELL YOUR LANDLORD TO BACK OFF.

You can tell them you only want to communicate in writing. You don't have to answer their phone calls or their texts about cash-for-keys offers.

TALK TO YOUR NEIGHBORS.

Landlords love to isolate tenants and intimidate them into moving out one by one. You're likely not going through this alone, and by sticking with your neighbors you're more likely to protect yourselves and your homes. Even if your neighbors are convinced they're going to take the deal, they may and can change their minds when you help them to learn their rights.

CONNECT WITH LATU.

Know your rights and get the facts by reaching out to your local chapter of the L.A. Tenants Union at latenantsunion.org/locals

STILL TEMPTED TO TAKE AN OFFER?

Even if your landlord has followed the rules and their agreement is legal, we urge you to reject cash-for-keys offers. Think about the following before you accept:

STAYING ALMOST ALWAYS MAKES FINANCIAL SENSE.

A rent-stabilized unit is extremely valuable, and it becomes more valuable the longer you are in it. If you have been in your unit for more than a couple of years, a one-time buy-out will never be enough to cover the amount of money you would save by staying in your rent-stabilized home. If you are offered \$20,000 (after taxes \$14,000), and your new place costs \$500 more than your last one every month, after two years the payout has disappeared. Now you're paying \$6,000 more in rent every year.

YOU MIGHT LOSE GOVERNMENT BENEFITS OR SUBSIDIES.

Because a buyout payment is treated as income, moving you into a higher bracket, you could lose your SNAP, Medical, healthcare subsidies, Section 8 vouchers, even student financial aid. Having to suddenly pay more for healthcare premiums, groceries, or rent, could end up costing you more money than you got!

TAXES TAKE A BIG CUT.

30% of the money you receive as a buyout will have to be paid in taxes to the federal government, and still more will go to the state. If you spend all the money before taxes are due you will have to come up with it or be in debt.

DON'T FORGET MOVING COSTS.

Starting over has a price. And if you don't secure a lease by your move-out date, you might get stuck paying for a hotel.

LATENANTSUNION.ORG/LOCALS | INFO@LATENANTSUNION.ORG | (213) 986-8266

DON'T ACCEPT CASH FOR KEYS: KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

AN L.A. TENANTS UNION GUIDE

HAVE YOU BEEN OFFERED MONEY TO LEAVE YOUR HOME?
HAVE YOU ACCEPTED AN OFFER LIKE THIS?
LEARN YOUR RIGHTS AND GET THE FACTS.

Why would your landlord offer you money to leave your home? It's not because they're being nice! The answer is simple: it's because they can make more money once you leave, re-renting your apartment at a higher price. If your landlord is offering you money, it's likely because your home is covered under LA's Rent Stabilization Ordinance, which also protects you against evictions. Because they CANNOT EASILY EVICT YOU, your landlord is trying to get you out with a cash-for-keys agreement, also called a "voluntary vacate" agreement, or a buyout.

There are LAWS governing voluntary vacate agreements, and your landlord has to follow every single one.

LATU members have turned down offers of \$50,000, \$75,000, \$100,000, and more. They said no to these large amounts of money because they got support from the L.A. Tenants Union, learned their rights, and decided to stay put.

LATU is made up of tenants who teach each other our rights, and support each other in our fight to stay in our homes and communities. Join us.

WE'LL FIGHT WITH YOU!

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KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO REFUSE.

You do not have to accept a cash-for-keys offer. Your landlord or manager may claim you have to accept, or that they will evict you immediately if you do not accept. These are lies. You DO NOT have to accept any offer.

YOU CAN CHANGE YOUR MIND EVEN IF YOU'VE ALREADY SIGNED.

If you have accepted a cash-for-keys offer but want to stay in your home, it's not too late to change your mind. By law, you have 30 days to cancel the agreement. Don't lose hope if it has been more than 30 days since you signed the agreement, you still have options.

YOUR LANDLORD HAS TO PAY YOU A MINIMUM AMOUNT.

The amount your landlord must pay you to voluntarily leave your home is stipulated by LA law, according to the amount of time you have lived in your home, the number of tenants you live with, and your disability status. Many times, landlords offer less than the minimum required by law—make sure you know what you're entitled to. Many times, landlords claim that an offer is a one-time deal, that the amount can't increase, or that an offer will expire if you don't take it right away—these are lies. (We have seen landlords say "Accept \$25,000 by the end of this week or get nothing" and then later offer \$50,000.)

YOUR LANDLORD HAS TO FILE THE AGREEMENT WITH THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT AND GIVE YOU A COPY OF HCIDLA'S VOLUNTARY VACATE INFORMATION SHEET BEFORE YOU SIGN.

If the department doesn't have copies of the offer, consider it a fake. You can confirm they have it on file and that you've received the correct information sheet by calling HCIDLA at 866-557-7368.

YOU CAN SEEK DAMAGES IF THE ABOVE RULES AREN'T FOLLOWED.

Mentioning this is sometimes useful to put a landlord in their place.

HARASSMENT IS ILLEGAL AND WRONG.


If you are being pressured, harassed, or threatened in any way, you have rights. LATU will stand with you. You should document the behavior and file a complaint. You even have protections if your landlord retaliates against any decision you make.

YOU DESERVE TO STAY.


You don't have to own your housing to be a member of your community. Think of your family, friends, and neighbors in your community, your children's school, your favorite restaurant, all the things that make your house a home. These are worth fighting for, and we'll fight with you!


My name is Alma Angel. I am a single mother of two girls and a boy, and I have lived happily in Highland Park for 23 years.

A few months ago, a new company, K3, bought the building I live in, and they sent a man named Angel Escobar to come intimidate me into leaving my home. Angel Escobar came to my house three times, offering me money for the keys to my apartment. At first, he told me that I would have to leave the apartment anyway because I did not own the apartment, and he offered me \$21,000, which I did not accept. Then he offered me \$40,000 to leave, and my answer was the same—No! Angel Escobar then threatened me and said if I did not accept the offer, K3 would not make any repairs on my apartment.

I sought help from the Housing Department and they gave me some advice, but I still was afraid that K3 would find a way to force me to leave. But thank goodness I met people from the Los Angeles Tenants Union, and they  helped my building form a Tenants Association! They gave me a lot of information and the strength to move forward.

When K3 realized that I was no longer alone they came to offer me \$100,000, and I said no again. I started to think: this is the home of my children! My rent is low and I have the benefit of having rent control. With \$100,000, I would only live a few years! I could maybe make a down payment on a house, but what then? Did I really have money to cover all my expenses? Would it be worth it? I also realized that with \$100,000 I would lose all benefits like my medical coverage, and most importantly, help for my children's school! My children come first and I want to teach them that money comes easy sometimes, but that you always have to think about the future, and you cannot let yourself be intimidated.

I just want to say to anyone who is going through something similar to my situation not to be afraid, that there is always someone who can help us. 

 I have learned a lot with my neighbors and our Tenants Association. I do not have the words to thank them for everything they have done for my family and for me!

Now, thanks to all of them, I live peacefully IN MY APARTMENT! And we have forced K3 to do repairs on my apartment—I have a new carpet after 23 years!

—testimonial from Alma Angel, LATU member in Northeast LA