



June, 2010

A Resolution Regarding a Rental Licensing Ordinance

The Associated Students of Western Washington University Find:

- a. The majority of Western Washington University students live off campus in the City of Bellingham; the majority of students living off campus rent either apartments or homes.
- b. The lack of licensing for rental property owners in the City of Bellingham has allowed for landlords to inconsistently adhere to the housing codes and for many landlords to operate outside the landlord-tenant law in Washington State.
- c. The current system requires tenants to file complaints about their landlords in order to compel inspections or enforcement of the code.
- d. Most student tenants do not have enough knowledge of building and fire codes to identify a violation and are therefore unable to seek the appropriate remedy. In the absence of this knowledge the effectiveness of the current complaint-based system is disabled in its entirety.
- e. A rental housing inspection program would be required to comply with state regulations that require forty-eight (48) hours notice before entry into a rental unit.
- f. Rental licensing programs that have a fee per unit less than \$50 will likely have a negligible direct effect on the cost of rents in Bellingham.
- g. Enforcement of housing standards will remove delinquent landlords from the market so that compliant landlords will have more fair competition.
- h. Inspectors could be used to enforce Bellingham's "rule of three" as well as other local, state, or federal laws and ordinances.
- i. The implementation of a licensing and inspection program for rentals in Bellingham would create a database of rental properties and code violations, which is something that does not currently exist.



Associated Students of Western Washington University
Board of Directors

The Associated Students of Western Washington University Resolve:

- a. Tenants entering into a lease with a landlord, have a reasonable expectation of safety and housing code compliance.
- b. It is unreasonable to have a complaint-based system that requires tenants to have a working knowledge of building and fire codes.
- c. A rental licensing program should include a provision that funds and/or creates educational opportunities for tenants to learn more about their rights and responsibilities.
- d. A rental housing program should be designed in a way that will keep costs low for landlords and tenants.
- e. A rental licensing program should include a limitation on inspectors that prevent them from enforcing the “rule of three” and other laws that are not a part of the building or fire codes.
- f. A rental licensing program should include the creation of a public rental property database that will include code violations, inspections, and inspection outcomes.
- g. A rental licensing program in the City of Bellingham would have an overall positive effect on student renters.