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Tenants were promised lawyers, but many still face eviction alone



NICK WAGNER / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Erin Lungwitz, a legal assistant with the Housing Justice Project, helps a tenant with court paperwork as they work to avoid eviction last week in Seattle.

By HEIDI GROOVER
Seattle Times business reporter

In 2021, Washington became the first state to guarantee low-income tenants facing eviction the right to an attorney.

On a recent afternoon at the King County Courthouse, it's difficult to tell.

A young woman in a pale blue T-shirt sits alone before a judge, explaining that she ran out of savings and fell behind on rent. After moving across the country, she says she hasn't yet found full-time work and has nowhere else to go.

CASES SURGE | State and local legal aid leaders say they lack the resources to represent every low-income tenant.

"It is very much a high risk of me being homeless and sleeping in my car with my dog," she says.

She doesn't dispute that she owes unpaid rent and the judge moves her case along, ruling in favor of the landlord and ordering her eviction.

"Good luck to you," the judge says, and moves on to the next case.

The cycle repeats all afternoon.

Tenant after tenant beams into the court's Zoom link from their phone or computer. They try to avoid losing their homes, to limit the effect of the eviction on their future rental prospects or to at least buy themselves more time before moving out — all without full legal representation. They rarely dispute that they owe

unpaid rent. They almost always lose.

This is not how eviction cases are supposed to look.

State lawmakers in 2021 worried about the imbalance of power between landlords who overwhelmingly had legal representation and tenants who didn't, so they passed the law granting low-income tenants a right to counsel in eviction cases. Seattle passed a similar law.

The state began funding more tenant attorneys and, from Seattle to Spokane, tenants who qualified and wanted legal representation

See > **EVICCTIONS, A10**

Consumers begin to feel the pinch of tariffs

By SYDNEY EMBER
The New York Times

Companies are starting to shift more tariff-related costs onto consumers.

Many businesses chose to absorb the additional tax during the early days of President Donald Trump's trade war. But evidence is emerging that they are running out of options to keep prices stable in the face of deteriorating profit margins, suggesting that the tariffs could have a more pronounced effect on prices in the months ahead.

Government data, including from the Commerce Department this past week, shows that prices rose in June on items heavily exposed to tariffs, such as home furnishings, toys and appliances.

And in recent days — before Trump announced tariffs for much of the world Thursday night — Adidas, Procter & Gamble, Stanley Black & Decker and other large corporations told investors that they either had increased prices or planned to do so soon to offset the tariff costs. Companies like Walmart and toymakers Hasbro and Mattel already had warned that tariffs would lead to higher prices.

"We have no interest in running a lower-margin business, particularly due to tariffs," Richard Westenberg, the chief financial officer of Carter's, a children's apparel maker, said on a call with analysts July 25. "And if this is something that's going to be a permanent increase to our cost structure, we have to find a way to cover it."

Economists have been watching

See > **TARIFFS, A3**

Airbus' big A380s get costlier as they get older

By ANGUS WHITLEY
AND DANNY LEE
Bloomberg

The world's largest commercial passenger jet, the Airbus SE A380, enjoyed an unexpected resurgence hauling full loads of passengers when global travel rebounded after the pandemic. But keeping the aging superjumbo safely airborne is becoming an increasingly expensive headache for airlines.

Two decades after its maiden flight, regulatory bulletins ordering repairs, inspections or replacement parts for the massive four-engined plane are piling up. While some are procedural, such as a demand for timely equipment checks, others are more serious.

Leaking escape slides, cracked seals and a ruptured landing-gear axle feature among 95 airworthiness directives for the A380 listed by the European Union Aviation Safety Agency since January 2020.

That's about double the number of directives for large Boeing aircraft in the same period.

With newer, more fuel-efficient jets in short supply, airlines committed to the twin-deck

See > **AIRBUS, A7**

UW, other Washington colleges face big financial challenges

EDUCATION LAB

By KATHERINE LONG
Special to The Seattle Times

Across the state, Washington's struggling public colleges and universities are laying off staff, raising tuition, cutting administrators and trimming programs.

State budget cuts have landed at a time when severe cutbacks by President Donald Trump's administration, on top of inflation, are exerting financial stress on the schools. The administration's decision to broadly cut billions in federal

research dollars will be a major revenue hit to the University of Washington. The cost of providing health care and other benefits to staff is rising. And international students — who help subsidize in-state students by paying higher tuition — are turning to Europe, Canada and other countries, although a full tally of international enrollment won't be available until fall.

With all of those challenges, "it would have been opportune to ask the state to step in" with extra money, said Ruben Flores, executive

See > **COLLEGES, A11**



KEN LAMBERT / THE SEATTLE TIMES

The Trump administration's broad cuts in billions of federal research dollars will be a major revenue hit to the University of Washington.

Triangles, crescents, slivers: Can odd-shaped parcels help ease the urban housing crisis?

REGULATIONS | Zoning changes could open up more building, including multifamily units.

By PATRICK SISSON
The New York Times

Triangular plots from old railroad lines. Crescent-shaped parcels that used to be parking lots. And narrow strips of land squeezed between buildings.

For decades, builders ignored irregular lots, typically smaller and

narrower than standard square ones, because of zoning codes and rules. But as usable land becomes increasingly limited in urban areas, more cities and states are moving to change regulations to allow for building on odd plots, and for additional housing on land traditionally reserved for single-family homes.

Over the past year, the nation's 250 largest cities have made 257 significant zoning changes to clear the path for denser development, according to an analysis provided by ReZone AI, a firm that analyzes municipal zoning.

State-level zoning changes also have accelerated, said Alex Horowitz, director of the housing policy initiative at the Pew Charitable Trusts. From 2023-24, 96 laws were passed to help increase hous-

ing production, including adding development in a given area, and 80 laws have been passed this year.

The zoning changes get rid of minimum lot sizes and parking requirements that housing advocates and developers say have made it nearly impossible to build "the missing middle," or a variety of housing styles that fall between single-family homes and larger apartment buildings.

And nearly 20 cities and states are adopting the so-called single-stair reform, which requires fewer staircases in apartment buildings so they can be built on slender lots.

See > **HOUSING, A4**

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