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Next month thousands of young adults will head back to campuses all over the country. Little ones and teens will attend neighborhood schools. For interesting information about this yearly migration, don't miss **FOCUS: Suburbia "Back-to-School"** in the next week-end edition of your hometown newspaper.

The Security

Landlords Say Friendliness Gets Interpreted As Weakness

The landlord is always a bogeyman. Typically cast as a cruel tycoon with a heart of stone he is feared and hated, but seldom is his side of the rental story told. Recently, however, building owners across Michigan have begun to fight back. The rent deposit bill waiting passage in the Michigan House has stirred the other side to retort.

• Require a landlord to disclose to his tenants his address, the name of the financial institution where the security deposits are held and the account number. Tenants would have to leave a forwarding mailing address within 72 hours of moving out of an apartment.

• Require security deposits and any interest earned on them be kept in a separate account and not co-mingled with the landlord's operating funds.

• Limit security deposits to one month's rent.

• Consider the security deposit the property of the tenant until the landlord establishes a right to the money.

• Require the landlord to initiate court suit to recover his money if the tenant and landlord haven't mutually agreed on a returnable amount within 45 days.

• Require that the landlord send a list of damages and estimated cost of repairs to the tenant within 10 days after the tenant leaves. If the landlord doesn't do this, he loses the entire security deposit.

WHEN QUESTIONED about the first point of disclosing home address, one landlord who wished to remain anonymous stated, "Disaster. Simple disaster."

He explained, "When I first bought this building -- which, I might add, was my life's dream -- I tried to be friendly with the tenants. I didn't require a security deposit. Friendliness was interpreted as weakness. My tenants didn't pay on time making me late on my payments. I could have lost the building."

Landlords generally agree that tenants should have more than a post office box number as identification and only means of communication with the landlord. They also agree that this by no means should be the home address and phone of the building owner.

Tenants think of landlords as they do doctors. They assume that a call for help will be welcome day or night. People will call the landlord at 3 a.m. to report a dripping faucet that is keeping them awake. They call at midnight to report that the family next door has company that parked their car in the callers assigned space. They call to report that one dryer in the basement laundry gives less time than another. About a barking dog. A crying

baby. A lost key. Or a faulty garbage disposal.

Only after the building owner discusses the problem with the tenant does the caller seem to realize that not much can be done by the sleepy landlord at 3 a.m.

APARTMENT BUILDINGS may be a good investment, but nothing could be as profitable as the tenants believe their building to be. They multiply their monthly rental payment by the number of units in the building and thereby determine the profit the landlord rakes in monthly. Nothing could be farther from the truth in most cases.

Except for the large developments currently being built and financed by large syndicates and insurance companies, most multi-family structures in the Detroit area have outstanding mortgages that are whittled down by monthly payments, just like most single-family home mortgages.

Taxes must be paid. Someone has to cut the grass, clean the windows, paint apartments, make repairs and do all the chores a homeowner does only much more often, at greater expense with more resistance and less cooperation with the occupants.

The security deposit bill as presented to legislators in Lansing has been pushed by student groups from Michigan State University. According to a few experienced landlords in the East Lansing area, student renters are the worst offenders in property destruction and unpaid rent.

One weary East Lansing landlord cites a group of four young collegiate gentlemen who rented one of his deluxe furnished apartments when his building was first completed. The four signed a nine-month lease and submitted the first and last months' rent plus a damage deposit. Many consumer advocates would cite this man as an example of security deposit abuse, when, in fact, the landlord came out the big loser. During the year a bowling ball smashed through the living room wall, landed on the toilet in the bathroom. The toilet leaked through the floor ruining the plaster in the apartment below.

As the seasons changed, the young chaps decided a game of hockey was in order. A hose was connected to an outside faucet and water flowed over the apartment floor and the cold from the open windows transformed a new deluxe furnished apartment into a frozen skating rink.

LANSING LANDLORDS

have been accused of charging \$35 to \$40 for a coffee table that cost them \$10 by the gross. If the

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