

562A.36 Retaliatory conduct prohibited.

1. Except as provided in this section, a landlord may not retaliate by increasing rent or decreasing services or by bringing or threatening to bring an action for possession after:

a. The tenant has complained to a governmental agency charged with responsibility for enforcement of a building or housing code of a violation applicable to the premises materially affecting health and safety;

b. The tenant has complained to the landlord of a violation under section 562A.15; or

c. The tenant has organized or become a member of a tenants' union or similar organization.

2. If the landlord acts in violation of subsection 1 of this section, the tenant may recover from the landlord the actual damages sustained by the tenant and reasonable attorney's fees, and has a defense in action against the landlord for possession. In an action by or against the tenant, evidence of a good faith complaint within one year prior to the alleged act of retaliation creates a presumption that the landlord's conduct was in retaliation. The presumption does not arise if the tenant made the complaint after notice of a proposed rent increase or diminution of services. Evidence by the landlord that legitimate costs and charges of owning, maintaining or operating a dwelling unit have increased shall be a defense against the presumption of retaliation when a rent increase is commensurate with the increase in costs and charges. "Presumption" means that the trier of fact must find the existence of the fact presumed unless and until evidence is introduced which would support a finding of its nonexistence.

3. Notwithstanding subsections 1 and 2 of this section, a landlord may bring an action for possession if:

a. The violation of the applicable building or housing code was caused primarily by lack of reasonable care by the tenant or other person in the tenant's household or upon the premises with the tenant's consent;

b. The tenant is in default in rent; or

c. Compliance with the applicable building or housing code requires alteration, remodeling, or demolition which would effectively deprive the tenant of use of the dwelling unit. The maintenance of the action does not release the landlord from liability under section 562A.21, subsection 2.

[C79, 81, § 562A.36]