

# HARRISON BENIS & SPENCE, LLP

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

2033 Sixth Avenue Suite 1040

Seattle, WA 98121-2532

FAX (206) 448-1843

(206) 448-0402

Christopher T. Benis  
James C. Harrison\*  
Michael A. Spence  
Sandra A. Snow

*\*Also admitted in California*

Evan L. Loeffler  
*Of Counsel*

## 10 BIGGEST MISTAKES OF RESIDENTIAL LANDLORDS AND HOW TO AVOID THEM

1. Failing to properly screen applicants
  - Develop a rental criteria
  - Tenants are risks, but only take calculated risks
  - Self" screening v. investigative screening
  - Check ID
2. Using "Holding Deposits" incorrectly (RCW 59.18.253)
3. Failing to Properly Distinguish Between Refundable Security Deposits and Non-Refundable Fees (RCW 59.18.285)
4. Failure to use the correct type of rental agreement:
  - Use a current form
  - Use a Washington form
  - Use the correct type of agreement (single family v. multi-family)
  - Amend the form to meet your needs (rules and regulations)
  - Determine who the parties are (landlord and tenants)
  - Include all necessary addendums:
    - a) Lead Paint Disclosure/Pamphlet (pre-1978 only)
    - b) Smoke Detector Disclosure (single family)
    - c) Fire Safety Disclosure (multi-family)
    - d) Information for Tenants (Seattle only)
    - e) Utility Sub-metering Disclosures (Seattle only)
  - Draft with voluntary compliance in mind.
5. Failure to Prepare Move-In Checklist. RCW 59.18.260
6. Failing to respond to repair requests - RCW 59.18.060, 59.18.070 and 59.18.090
7. Illegally retaliating against a tenant.  
RCW 59.18.240
8. Jumping the Gun on Declaring Abandonment. RCW 59.18.310
9. Starting an unlawful detainer when it is not necessary.
  - Terminate under 20 days' notice (RCW 59.18.200)
  - Leases which automatically expire (RCW 59.18.220)
10. Failure to perform the Security Deposit Accounting and complete it correctly. (RCW 59.18.280).