

The Journal News

WEDNESDAY, MAY 26, 2021 | LOHUD.COM

State set to release \$2.7B in assistance for renters

Tenants can apply for federal aid starting June 1 via online portal



Tax Watch

David McKay Wilson
White Plains Journal News
USA TODAY NETWORK

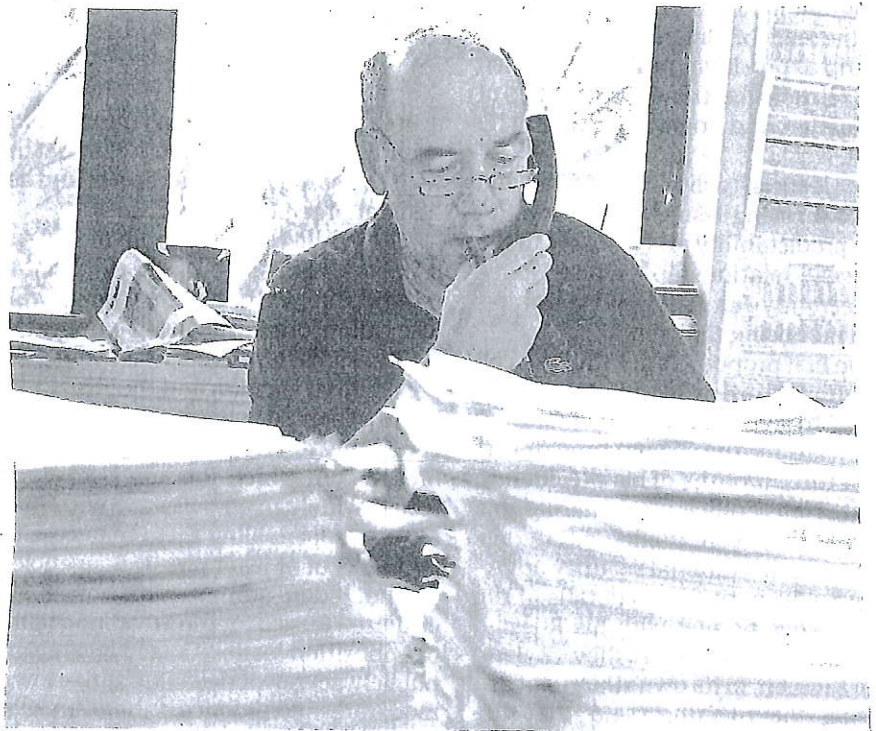
Tax Watch columnist David McKay Wilson looks at New York state's program to hand out COVID relief.

After months of uncertainty, Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced Tuesday that New York would make available \$2.7 billion in federal COVID aid to tenants behind in their rent, due to the pandemic.

The announcement comes as government leaders in Yonkers, Rochester, Monroe and Onondaga counties and three Long Island towns have decided to administer the COVID rental assistance through homegrown programs.

The benefits are substantial: renters can receive up to 12 months of back rent, and three months of rent payments going forward. They also qualify for up to 12 months of back utility payments.

The state will provide funding for all other qualified New York tenants through the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, at an online portal that will go live on June 1. Those qualified include



Dennis Hanratty, executive director of Mount Vernon United Tenants, said renters need to get their paperwork in order to qualify for the federal aid.

THE JOURNAL NEWS FILE

(OVER)

Rent aid

Continued from Page 1A

immigrants, regardless of their status in the U.S.

The announcement came on the same day Cuomo announced \$800 million in small business grants, from \$5,000 to \$50,000, for business costs incurred during the COVID pandemic, included money spent on payroll, rent or mortgage payments, taxes, utilities or personal protective equipment. Those applications will be available online on June 10.

"New Yorkers and small businesses in every corner of the state were devastated by the pandemic and as we continue to recover and rebuild, we need to make sure they have the resources they need to get back on their feet and succeed in a new reimagined economy," Cuomo said.

The upcoming release of the emergency rental assistance comes as the state's moratorium on evictions is set to expire on Aug. 31.

Dennis Hanratty, executive director of Mount Vernon United Tenants, hailed the state action. But he warned that tenants need to get their paperwork in order to qualify for the federal monies.

Among the documents they'll need: proof that their income was impacted by COVID, notices from their landlords about non-payment of rent, as well as notice of late payments for utility bills.

"I'm glad it's about to happen," said Hanratty. "It's going to get really chaotic now. We want to get that money out to help tenants in need."

Hanratty expected to learn more later this week when he meets with others nonprofit leaders who are members of Westchester's Eviction Prevention Network.

Rockland County Executive Ed Day said the rental relief was sorely needed by Rockland renters. He said the Rockland Department of Social Services will assist tenants with the application. "We know that residents are in desperate need of access to this funding," he said. "They have lost jobs, had their hours cut or been forced to leave jobs due to child care needs during the pandemic. Our Department of Social Services is ready to help local residents apply for this funding on Day 1."

Westchester Planning Commissioner Norma Drummond said Westchester will partner with the United Way and up to 11 nonprofit organizations to help tenants assemble the

The money will be awarded on a first-come, first-serve basis.

The state program includes tenants from across the state, including New York City, the city of Buffalo, as well as Westchester, Dutchess, Orange, Rockland and Putnam counties.

The state estimates that up to 200,000 New York households will qualify for the assistance.

documents needed to qualify for the rent relief. Westchester has yet to announce which nonprofits will be involved.

She expects that up to 3,000 Westchester tenants will qualify, including many low-income residents who live in public housing complexes in the county.

To qualify, renters must earn less than 80% of the area median income, be behind in their rent, have experienced financial hardship during the pandemic and are at risk for homelessness or what the state calls "housing instability."

Priority in the state program during the month of June will go to the unemployed, those earning up to 50% of the area median income, and other "vulnerable populations," according to Cuomo's office.

The money will be awarded on a first-come, first-serve basis. The state program includes tenants from across the state, including New York City, the city of Buffalo, as well as Westchester, Dutchess, Orange, Rockland and Putnam counties. The state estimates that up to 200,000 New York households will qualify for the assistance.

Follow Tax Watch columnist David McKay Wilson on Facebook or Twitter @davidmckaywilson.