

OKLAHOMA HOUSING AUTHORITIES:

Contact your State Senators and Representatives now and ask them to support and vote yes on the following legislation.

eCapitol News

PRESS-Bill proposes garnishing personal income tax refunds to pay public housing authority debt

Author: Senate Media

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(PRESS) A bill filed Thursday could help public housing authorities collect debts owed to them by tenants. **Senate Bill 1019**, by Sen. Earl Garrison and Rep. Jeannie McDaniel, would allow public housing authorities to file claims with the Oklahoma Tax Commission to deduct debts owed to them from tenants' personal income tax refunds. "Rent in public housing is based on one's income so there is no excuse to not to be able to pay it yet every month housing authorities around the state are left holding the bill when tenants skip out on their rent. A majority of those properties are also usually damaged leaving landlords with even more expenses to cover," said Garrison, D-Muskogee. "This bill would help housing authorities be able to recover at least some of their losses by garnishing people's personal income tax refunds."

State agencies, municipal courts and district courts currently collect debts, unpaid fines and costs of final judgments of at least \$50 from personal income tax refunds through the Warrant Intercept Program. SB 1019 would allow housing authorities to participate in the program.

Under the proposed bill, a public housing authority would send notice to the debtor's last known mailing address letting them know that their debt would be collected from their income tax refund. The debtor would have sixty days to contest the claim by sending a written request to the public housing authority requesting a hearing. If the debtor failed to apply for a hearing within that time period, the debt would be collected from the refund.

SB 1019 was requested by the Muskogee Housing Authority and is supported by the state chapter of the "National Association of Housing and Redevelopment". J.D. Foster, the Executive Director of the Muskogee Housing Authority, said passage of SB 1019 would help housing authorities around the state recoup some of their financial losses. "People who receive assistance like that given to them by housing authorities should be responsible for their rent and any intentional damages they cause, but unfortunately many tenants are not and it causes a tremendous financial burden for housing authorities," said Foster. "Sadly, when people skip out on their rent or damage property, it not only hurts the authority, it also takes away opportunities for other families in need of housing assistance. Being able to recoup our losses will ensure that we're able to continue to help as many Oklahoma families as possible."

There are 107 housing authorities throughout Oklahoma.

Over the years, the Tulsa Housing Authority has accrued just over \$5.5 million in outstanding debt due to unpaid rent and damages. During 2010 and 2011 alone, the Oklahoma City Housing Authority has a combined outstanding debt of \$575,000.