

Understanding DC Protective Orders Under the RENTAL Act

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The DC RENTAL Act has reshaped how protective orders work in eviction cases—making them faster, more consistent, and far more beneficial for housing providers. A protective order requires tenants to pay rent into the court registry rather than directly to the landlord, ensuring continued payment while a case is pending.

Before the RENTAL Act, landlords often faced long delays. Tenants could raise even minor disputes, pushing protective-order hearings months out and slowing down the eviction process. Now, judges are expected to issue preliminary protective orders at the very first hearing. Tenants may still request a Bell hearing or raise defenses, but they must begin making monthly payments immediately until the court adjusts the amount.

Since the Act took effect, DC courts have been issuing protective orders more reliably at initial hearings—resulting in steadier payments and fewer procedural setbacks for landlords.