

## Student housing issues at Texas State

By Micaela Butts  
[ilm26@txstate.edu](mailto:ilm26@txstate.edu)

SAN MARCOS- With the spring semester approaching, many students may find themselves seeking a fair housing contract, but university resources hope to help navigate the often confusing and dishonest process.

According to university enrollment, 38,000 people attend Texas State University. Despite claiming record breaking numbers, university officials have continued to acclaim students' increase as a reason to approve off campus housing. With 50 off campus apartment complexes in San Marcos, many students have utilized an attorney for students (AFS) to aid in the renting process. Attorney For Students is a legal service offered to every enrolled student that offers insight concerning their legal rights and responsibilities.

"I want you to be savvy consumers, know where your money is going, know who's giving you the information, know what's going to be happening on a day-to-day basis," said Attorney For Students lawyer Kama Davis. "I'm not here to tell you what to do. I'm just here to give you information so you can decide what's best for yourself."

Some students said they have unwittingly waived security deposits and were later charged for damages that existed before move-in. Landlords have four years to charge a tenant for damages after they move out, under the Texas Property Code, if the security deposit is waived upfront.

"Sanctuary Lofts was waving security deposits for people and that's one of the main reasons I signed there because I couldn't afford one at the time, but now being evicted, I could really use the security deposit right now and I haven't had anything given back to me," said sophomore Andrew Maglich. "I feel like waving security deposits is predatory as it is because you are enticing people who can't live there to come and live there."

Students are faced with the decision of a joint or individual lease. A joint lease has all residents under the same contract while an individual lease has each resident sign a separate lease with the landlord. With a joint lease, if one of the residents is unable or refuses to pay due rent, the remaining residents are held responsible for paying that residents rent. The Texas Property Code has shown to be intentionally written to benefit landlords.

"Joint leases are not great because it's in Texas and all of the laws in Texas are very anti-tenants and very pro-developer and pro-landlord, said Davis. "There's a lot of money behind that."

Many students find themselves in confusing leasing agreements because they don't fully understand the terms of their contract. Davis witnessed a leasing contract containing 127 pages when the average is known to be 45 to 65 pages. Students are faced with a pressure to sign within a small time frame and later regret not fully knowing the terms and conditions of the contract.

"A lot of the complexes in the area were offering discounts on the first month of rent if we signed early or within 24 hours of touring," said full time student Holloway Raulie. "Arba basically told

us we had to sign in 72 hours after touring so we were really worried about that. We rushed through our contracts, we still read them but not as thoroughly as I would've liked."

Roommate requests vary from each complex, however, Davis said that landlords have the ability to split you from the roommates that you have chosen and move you to another unit without your consent. Students can be matched with roommates that are not of their choosing.

"This roommate refused to respect us, she would blast the TV at 4 a.m. and smoke illegal substances after we begged her not to," said full time student Eryka Rodriguez. "At the end of the lease, she was the last person in that apartment and she trashed it. My other roommates and I got charged another \$500 because she left trash everywhere, had holes in the wall, and just simply made a mess."

Davis encourages students to exercise their vote this coming election and alert counsel what these complexes are doing.

For more information visit the Attorney For Students [website](#).