



## **Forget Another Stimulus Check: Millions of Americans Could Soon be Homeless**

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June 5, 2021

**Here's What You Need to Remember:** There is a clear argument for the moratorium: it has allowed many tenants, some unemployed and desperately in need of financial help, to remain in their homes during the pandemic.

In the early days of the pandemic, as many Americans lost their jobs and consequently fell behind on their rent, the Centers for Disease Control issued a federal moratorium on evictions. The reasoning was simple, and based on the concept of a public health benefit: large numbers of homeless Americans would spread the virus once they arrived in new housing. This, and the less explicit desire to protect Americans facing evictions because of the pandemic, meant that the expansive eviction measure received little criticism early on.

However, political pressures brought increased scrutiny to the order. The original CDC order was originally scheduled to expire on December 31, 2020. When it was clear that the pandemic would not be brought under control by then, the deadline was extended to June 30, 2021. Due to political pressure, it is possible that the CDC could unilaterally extend the moratorium again – to the relief of many tenants, but the increasing anger of many landlords who have been unable to threaten eviction to collect the rent they are owed.

In purely practical terms, it is immoral to insist that Americans can live in property that they do not own and not be forced to pay rent. Indefinite eviction moratoriums, much like rent control, has been widely criticized by economists as a measure that helps a few people in the short run and hurts many more over a longer period of time.

For instance, the Cato Institute, a libertarian-leaning think tank, harshly criticized the moratorium in September 2020, arguing that it forced landlords to assume tenants' debts and suggesting that it would distort the market, leading landlords to fail to continue upkeep on their properties and increase fees later to make up for their losses.

At the same time, however, there is a clear argument for the moratorium: it has allowed many tenants, some unemployed and desperately in need of financial help, to remain in their homes during the pandemic.

In early May, a Washington, DC judge struck down the CDC rule, declaring that the government agency had no constitutional authority to ban evictions. However, after the Biden administration indicated that it would challenge the ruling, the judge agreed to a hold pending an appeal. It is possible that the case will be taken up by the Supreme Court; in the mean time, however, the measure is still in effect, and still slated to expire at the end of June.

No matter one's stance on the issue, it is clear that rent will be a major concern in the aftermath of the pandemic. Billions of dollars are owed nationwide in back rent; it is certain that when the CDC order is lifted, whether suddenly or eventually, a wave of evictions will follow.