



What to Know About the Proposed Rent Control Ballot Question

Progressive activists submitted signatures for a 2026 ballot question that would overturn a law passed by Massachusetts voters and **impose one of the nation's most restrictive and damaging statewide rent control agendas across ALL 351 cities and towns** in the Commonwealth.

We've already been down this road. Massachusetts voters in 1994 banned rent control for a simple reason: it doesn't work. After more than two decades of rent control, Massachusetts voters recognized the damage this policy did to our communities. This new proposal is a step back in time and will only worsen the current housing shortage.

Study after study, [including research from MIT about the impacts in Cambridge](#), and a 2026 study from the [Center for State Policy Analysis at Tufts](#) has found that rent control discourages investment in housing, leading to fewer homes, less home and building maintenance, and lower property values. **Its impact will not be limited to renters and property owners: it will impact everyone in MA.**

We cannot let history repeat itself. We need real solutions for our housing crisis: not broken policies that have already failed.

What is in this ballot question?

A one-size-fits-all mandate.

- Communities are not allowed to opt-out of this measure, even if local residents vote against it.
- Rent control would be automatically imposed in all 351 Massachusetts communities, from Cape Cod to Boston to the Berkshires, regardless of individual community needs or wants
 - When rent control was banned in 1994, only THREE of 351 communities in Massachusetts had rent control policies in place
 - In the 2025-2026 legislative session, less than FIVE of 351 communities have even asked for rent control

The most restrictive statewide policy in the United States.

- The ballot question states that annual rent increases “shall not exceed the annual increase in Consumer Price Index or 5%, whichever is lower...”
- For context:
 - The average CPI increase from 2005-2024 was just [2.58%](#) In 2024, CPI growth was 2.9%
 - Meanwhile, in 2024 alone, [Massachusetts property taxes increased an average of 5.1%](#)
 - From 2018-2023, [home insurance premiums in Massachusetts jumped 22.8%](#)
- Only three other states in the U.S. have statewide rent control, and all allow higher levels of rent growth:
 - Oregon's 2019 statewide law limits rent increases to CPI PLUS 7%
 - California's 2020 statewide law limits rent increases to CPI PLUS 5%
 - Washington's 2025 statewide law limits rent increases to CPI PLUS 7%

A devastating blow to housing creation and housing quality.

- History and data have proven repeatedly that housing creation virtually disappears in communities with rent control
 - Cambridge, Massachusetts, saw construction ground to a halt under rent control



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- Upon its repeal in 1994, [improvements and new construction increased 20%](#)
- Saint Paul, Minnesota saw a [79% decrease](#) in new apartment construction permits after adopting rent control in 2022
- Montgomery County, Maryland, saw [new multifamily permits decrease](#) from 2,093 to only 54 between 2024 and 2025 after adopting rent control
- [Existing units](#) are frequently taken off the market, or fall into a state of disrepair, as cost increases including property taxes and necessary upgrades outpace rental rate increases

A strain on property values and municipal budgets.

- A 2026 study from the [Center for State Policy Analysis at Tufts](#) found that this rent control proposal would shrink the residential property tax base by anywhere from 6-9% in municipalities across the Commonwealth.
 - After a decade of rent control, property values would decrease by nearly 14 percent, costing home- and property-owners roughly \$300 billion.
 - These effects would be permanent, and amount to a sustained loss of investment for homeowners and a durably shrunken tax base to fund schools, police, fire departments, and municipal services that communities rely on.

An inequitable proposal that will hurt small property owners.

- Rents covered under this proposal NEVER reset to market rates
- Unlike the prior Massachusetts law, under this measure, vacant units remain under the rent control law: meaning that property owners who have kept rents low for older or long-term tenants will never be able to reset those units to market rents if and when they become vacant
- No other statewide rent control measures include vacancy control
- The ballot question establishes baseline rents as of January 31, 2026 – NOT 2027 – 10 months before voters will go to the polls

A “boon” to short-term rentals and a nightmare for seasonal communities.

- The ballot question exempts short term rentals of 13 days or less
- This means that any property rented out for 14 days or more (even once!) could be covered by rent control forever, with the burden on the property owner to understand the law or risk significant legal fees and penalties
- In every community, but particularly seasonal communities in the Berkshires, or on Cape Cod, Nantucket, or Martha’s Vineyard, this exemption could incentivize more property owners to shift from monthly, seasonal or longer-term rentals to short-term platforms, exacerbating the housing crisis in those regions

Who We Are: Housing for Massachusetts is a coalition of Massachusetts citizens, small property owners, family-owned real estate companies, affordable housing developers, and housing advocates. We aim to educate and advocate for policies that support housing creation in Massachusetts, improving availability and affordability for all.

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