

ORGANIZER'S GUIDE TO WINNING A STATE HOMES GUARANTEE

this guide was produced by the
CAMPAIGN TO WIN A NATIONAL HOMES GUARANTEE

a campaign of People's Action | homesguarantee.com | [@pplsaction](https://twitter.com/pplsaction)



WHAT IS THE HOMES GUARANTEE?

THE PLAN THAT WILL ENSURE
EVERY PERSON
IN THE UNITED STATES HAS
**SAFE, ACCESSIBLE,
SUSTAINABLE, AND
PERMANENTLY
AFFORDABLE
HOUSING.**

Truly achieving a Homes Guarantee will require decisive action at the federal, state, and local level. This guide offers steps you can take to advance a Homes Guarantee in your state.

It begins with a set of proposed policies that take steps towards our federal vision, follows with strategies to implement them, and closes with organizing tools to build a base of directly impacted people around state campaigns.

CONTRIBUTORS

Many of the strategies and ideas contained in this guide draw on the work of the New York State Homes Guarantee campaign — credit first and foremost to its organizers. Special thanks to Divya Sundaram, John Washington, and Tara Raghuvver for their contributions. Written by Cea Weaver. Edited and designed by Leigh Friedman.

CONTACT

Let's work together. Email homes@peoplesaction.org to be connected to a member of the national organizing team.

ABOUT

Our campaign was formed through 18 months of biweekly meetings of directly impacted people and grassroots organizers affiliated with the People's Action network. Together, we co-create a vision for 21st century housing justice: a Homes Guarantee. Later, progressive policy experts joined the team to craft policies that create the level of systemic change needed to achieve a true Homes Guarantee and advance racial and climate justice.

The national Homes Guarantee demands 12 million new social housing units and protections for renters and bank tenants.

Social housing is housing that is permanently removed from the housing market, either publicly or municipally owned, or held by mechanisms like community land trusts.

Bank tenants, often called homeowners, live in housing owned by banks and other lenders, and are beholden to the frequently predatory terms of their loan.



Invest in social and public housing

Demand more funding for public housing in your state budget.

The federal government has intentionally divested from public housing across the nation. State governments should use their resources to invest in public housing authorities under their jurisdiction.

Fight for tenant or community 'right to purchase' legislation.

Tenant Opportunity to Purchase (TOPA) policies empower tenants to collectively take control of their homes and create permanently affordable housing by giving renters the first opportunity to purchase their homes should the landlord seek to sell. The state should also create a complementary funding and technical assistance program to ensure that TOPA can be exercised by all tenants. In order to ensure generational affordability, buildings purchased through TOPA must require tenant-purchasers to participate in limited equity agreements with a commitment to community or collective ownership and resale restrictions.

Campaign to improve your state's existing affordable housing funding programs.

Most states offer some financing for the development of new affordable housing, like bonds, Low Income Housing Tax Credits, or other mechanisms. Organized housing groups can leverage these public financing options to advance the Homes Guarantee vision. Policy solutions may be:

- A 15% set aside for homeless individuals on City or State funded projects, which was recently won in New York State.
- Modify the state's Qualified Action Plan (QAP), which state governments must draft to receive LIHTC allocations. QAPs should prioritize LIHTC financing for projects that advance social housing a social housing vision.

Protect renters and bank tenants

Pass a local tenants' bill of rights.

A local tenants' bill of rights may include protections against evictions, requirements about equitable code enforcement and livable housing conditions, and, importantly, a tenants' right to organize a tenant union in your home.

Pass a tenants' right to counsel.

More information on right to counsel and how to organize for it in a way that builds renter power and democracy is available [here](#).

Pass good cause eviction with strong rent control.

Universal rent control is the basic idea that every tenant should have the right to renew their lease with minimal rent increase that they can afford.

- Strong rent control policies require landlords to register rents with the state, provide a democratic mechanism for tenants to negotiate rent increases, prevent rent increases for capital improvements, and limit vacancy increases.
- Many states have preemption on rent regulation that prevents renters from organizing locally for rent control. If your state has a preemption on rent control, you can organize to lift the ban.

Fight belt-tightening for the poor and subsidies for the rich

While many state leaders will say there is no money to solve the housing crisis, they will regularly

advance economic development policies that subsidize luxury real estate development.



The path to victory

Win the battle of big ideas.

Develop strong narrative guides and a media strategy that can shift the popular understanding of the housing market. Many of the things that we are fighting for at the state level (e.g. rent control, public housing) are unpopular because of decades of attacks on low income people of color by those who seek to hold and consolidate their own power. But the ideas behind what we are fighting for (stability, ending austerity, collective infrastructure, etc.) are deeply popular. Campaigns should develop a strong narrative guide, for organizers – not for communications professionals – that help us tell our stories and build our power. Storytelling is critical to how people make sense of and understand the world. It's important to ground your campaign strategy in the stories we tell about our housing and why the policies that we are pushing are deeply connected to our own lived experience. Data is not enough!

Play offense.

Make bold demands.

Build your base and your coalition.

Bring together different and disparate parts of the housing movement. It's important that renters, bank tenants, public housing residents, and people experiencing homelessness identify that they are all impacted by the same housing crisis. No one wins until we all win! Opposition forces in private industry and state houses have historically won by dividing us from one another.

Leverage the electoral cycle.

As more and more people rent their homes tenants are a growing part of the progressive electoral base.

NO ONE WINS UNTIL WE ALL WIN!

However, popular perception is that renters and public housing residents – those most impacted by the housing crisis – don't vote. Leverage local elections to disprove this narrative and elect people with a mandate to deliver on tenants' rights.

MORE TOOLS

TEACH-IN for HOUSING ORGANIZERS

Sample Participant Agenda
Sample Facilitator Agenda
Sample Slidedeck

(BIG STATE? DO
IT ON A VIDEO
CONFERENCE
CALL!)

COLLECT STORIES

Story Collecting Guide