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**LATEST LEGAL SERVICES NEWSLETTER FOCUSES ON
LANDLORD-TENANT SECURITY DEPOSIT ISSUES**

EDISON — The latest newsletter of Legal Services of New Jersey (LSNJ) advises poor people about their rights regarding rental security deposits, especially the conditions under which tenants may be able to apply the withheld deposits toward next month's rent.

The bilingual publication, "Looking Out For Your Legal Rights," may be viewed online at www.lsnjlaw.org and also is available at all Legal Services offices in New Jersey.

In addition to placing a maximum amount on deposits, the New Jersey Rent Security Deposit Act specifies the detailed information landlords must give a tenant about where the deposit is being held and other related and pertinent details. If that is not done, the tenant can notify the landlord that the deposit should be applied to the monthly rent — even if that is against the landlord's wishes. Additionally, the landlord cannot require a new or replacement security deposit for as long as the tenant remains.

The law and related court decisions further stipulate that the amount of a deposit can be no more than 150 percent of the rent. If a landlord opts to take less, that initial deposit then only can be increased annually by no more than 10 percent.

At the end of leases deposits must be returned with interest they earned while in banks.

Tenants are advised that to get the full protection of the law, they should keep detailed proof they paid a deposit, and, if possible, get the landlord to sign a receipt.

Meanwhile, the latest LSNJ newsletter offers advice on the various programs and contact points available for poor people over the summer for assistance with cooling bills, nutrition programs and free summer meals for kids and teens. It also lays out what people can do to forestall a threatened utility shutoff during a heat wave, especially if the affected folks feel that would jeopardize their health.

Legal Services of New Jersey (LSNJ), located in Edison, heads the state's Legal Services system, a network of six independent non-profit corporations and has been providing free essential legal aid in civil matters to low-income people through offices in all 21 counties for more than 50 years. Since its inception, LSNJ has provided representation in more than 2.4 million cases.

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