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PHANTOM LANDLORDS LOCKED OUT IN NEW JERSEY

EDISON — The current newsletter of Legal Services of New Jersey (LSNJ) sets out how tenants planning to file suits or complaints against landlords cannot be thwarted simply because the landlords or their representatives cannot be found. In short, there's a potent law in New Jersey that effectively says, in most rental situations, there is no hiding place for phantom or absentee landlords.

The bilingual publication, "Looking Out For Your Legal Rights," may be viewed online at www.lsnjlaw.org/media-center/publications.

The tenant-friendly law specifies that if landlords or any of their associates or operatives want to operate in the Garden State, they must first register with the state or municipal officials, The registration forms must include where the landlord or designated representative can be reached any time or any place—even in a foreign country—and that information must be readily and visibly available for tenants to see.

The law has an enforcement tool. Not only can landlords who do not comply face fines, but, perhaps more importantly, they are prohibited during the noncompliance interim from evicting a tenant.

The law applies to all rental properties except two-family owner-occupied homes.

A separate article in the publication highlights the long-standing state statute requiring inspection of rental unit for lead paint hazards every three years or sooner in certain situations. If someone in a rental unit tests positive for lead paint poisoning, that tenant may be able to file a personal injury lawsuit against the landlord.

Another article focuses on how to get a name change in Jersey.

Legal Services of New Jersey (LSNJ), located in Edison, provides free essential legal aid in civil matters to low-income people.

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