



# Fair Rent Commission Factsheet

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## What is a Fair Rent Commission (FRC)?

It is a municipal board with the primary power to restrict rental charges in residential housing that are “so excessive as to be harsh and unconscionable.” It holds hearings and makes decisions in response to tenant complaints in the same way as other municipal boards.

## What did P.A. 22-30 do?

It required each town with a population greater than 25,000 to adopt a fair rent commission ordinance in accordance with the Fair Rent Commission Act (C.G.S. 7-148b through 7-148f).

## What standards does a FRC apply?

C.G.S. 7-148c lists 13 standards that must be considered if applicable. The most important are size of the rent increase, the condition of the premises, the landlord’s operating costs, the services included in the rent (e.g. heat and utilities), the income of the tenant, and the rents for comparable housing in the town.

## What are the most common FRC decisions?

- A rent increase is reduced or denied.
- The landlord is required to phase in a rent increase.
- A rent increase is delayed until the landlord has complied with health and safety requirements or has made necessary repairs.
- The tenant’s claim is denied.

## Are complaints worked out without a hearing?

They often are. In addition, many FRC decisions are themselves compromises. When rent complaints are driven by the landlord’s failure to maintain the property, the commission will often reinforce the town’s code enforcement agencies by preventing a rent increase while awaiting compliance with code orders. When a fair rent complaint is generated by poor housing conditions, commissions will often request a code agency to make an inspection.

## How expensive is a commission to the town?

Most towns that have fair rent commissions currently use existing staff to support a commission.

## Why can’t tenants just go to court?

With certain exceptions, Connecticut tenants have no right to challenge a rent increase except in a town with a fair rent commission. In the absence of a fair rent commission, a tenant who refuses to accept an increase can either move or risk eviction by refusing to pay the higher rent. Connecticut courts have no general authority to decide whether a rent increase is unconscionable or unfair.

## Is this rent control?

No, it is completely different. It does not restrict rents generally and landlords remain free to charge whatever they want. It is triggered only by a tenant complaint and only by a showing by the tenant that the rental charge is unfairly excessive.

## How Many Towns Now Have Such Ordinances?

The FRC Act was adopted as an enabling act in 1969. With the expansion under P.A. 22-30, FRC ordinances now exist in 52 towns, of which 45 have populations greater than 25,000. FRC towns include:

**Large cities (5):** Hartford, New Haven, Stamford, Bridgeport, Waterbury

**Mid-size cities (16):** Norwalk, Danbury, New Britain, Manchester, Groton, Enfield, Bristol, East Hartford, Mansfield, Meriden, Middletown, New London, Norwich, Shelton, Torrington, Vernon

**Suburbs (27):** West Hartford, Hamden, Glastonbury, Newington, West Haven, Windsor, Wethersfield, Farmington, Simsbury, Rocky Hill, Bloomfield, Branford, Cheshire, East Haven, Fairfield, Greenwich, Milford, Naugatuck, New Milford, Newtown, Ridgefield, South Windsor, Southington, Stratford, Trumbull, Wallingford, Westport

**Smaller towns (4):** Colchester, Clinton, Westbrook, Killingworth