

Building Language Skills with The Seattle Times

January 21, 2016

Article: “Task force to look for ways to curb housing barriers for those with records”

Tuesday, January 19, 2016 in the e-Edition of The Seattle Times, NW Tuesday, page B7

Pre-Reading:

Read the title of this article. What is a barrier? What do you think some barriers to finding housing would be? Why do you think some people have a harder time finding housing than others?

Vocabulary:

As you read, look for the following vocabulary words that appear in today’s article. Write down what you think the words mean based on the “context,” or how the words are used in the sentence in which they appear. Next, look up the definitions in a dictionary and see how close your guess was for each word.

advocacy

barriers

campaign

coalition

criminal

discrimination

equitable

incarceration

landlord

legislation

ordinances

proposal

screen out

task force

would-be

Comprehension:

1. How many members will the new task force Seattle Mayor Ed Murray is announcing have?
2. The new task force will work on how the city can reduce barriers to housing for people with what?
3. The volunteer task force will develop proposals to address what type of discrimination?

4. The task force will also increase enforcement of Seattle's existing fair-housing _____. **(Fill in the blank with vocabulary word)**
5. What did Mayor Murray say a lack of fair access to housing can lead to?
6. Last month, a coalition led by Columbia Legal Services and the Tenants Union launched a campaign for Seattle legislation banning landlords from automatically doing what?
7. The Rental Housing Association criticized the proposal, arguing people in Seattle "want to know they're safe" and therefore want their landlords to be allowed to do what?
8. What percent of adults in this country has the U.S. Department of Justice estimated have criminal records?

Post-Reading:

Read the following passage from the article and discuss the following questions in a group:

"Too many of our residents face lifelong barriers to housing due to their criminal histories long after they have served their sentences and paid their debt to society. Lack of fair access to housing can lead to homelessness and a deeper dependence on public services. We must ensure everyone in our community has a fair chance to find a stable home."

What does it mean to "pay a debt to society"? Why do you think people might consider serving a prison sentence as paying a debt to society? Do you think once someone has committed a crime and served their sentence they deserve a new start – why or why not? What kinds of barriers might someone who has committed a crime and served their sentence face once they are released? Why is having a stable home important? What do you think we can do as a community to ensure that everyone in our community has a fair chance at finding a stable home?

Building Language Skills:

Read the following passage, and complete the activity below:

"Creating an affordable Seattle means we must have equitable access to housing for everyone," Murray said in a statement.

Do you think that the city of Seattle or the community you live in has equitable access to housing for everyone – why or why not? What are some different types of housing that are available in your community? Divide the class into groups (task forces) and come up with your own proposal on how you would address rental-housing discrimination and equitable access to housing for everyone in your community. Include how you would address housing for people with criminal histories and why.

Comprehension Question Answers:

1. The new task force will have 18 members.
2. Criminal records
3. Rental-housing discrimination
4. ordinances
5. It can lead to homelessness and a deeper dependence on public services.
6. Rejecting all would-be tenants with criminal records.
7. Screen out tenants with criminal records.
8. 33 percent of adults