



March 12, 2026

**Statement of Support from Pacific Legal Foundation for House Bill 8066—
A bill to protect private property owners from squatters**

Chair McEntee and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

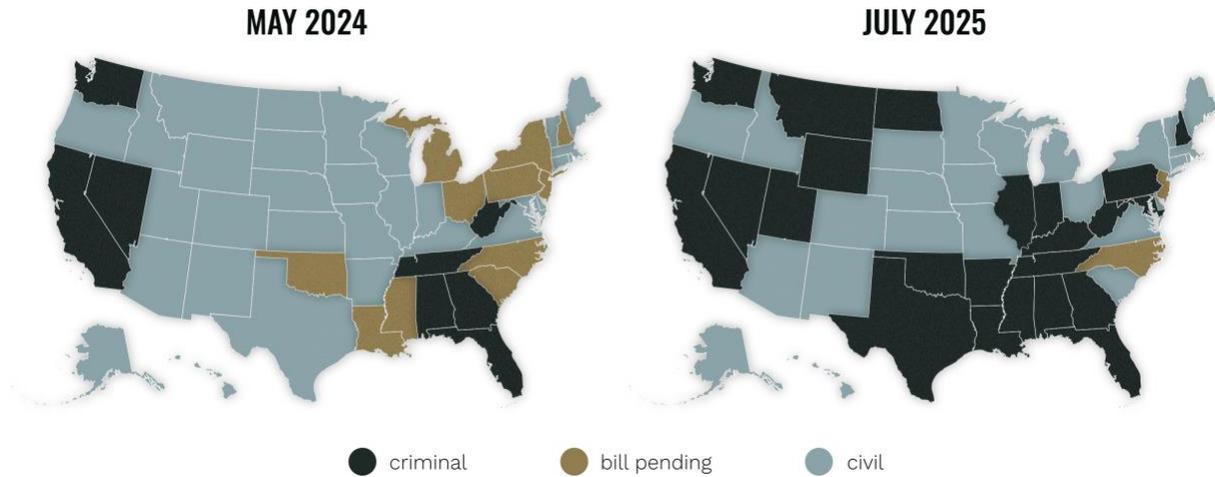
My name is Jaimie Cavanaugh, and I am Senior State Policy Counsel at Pacific Legal Foundation (PLF). PLF is a nonprofit public interest law firm dedicated to defending Americans' liberties when threatened by government overreach and abuse. Since its founding more than 50 years ago, PLF has been helping Americans protect their constitutional rights in courthouses and state houses across the country. PLF has 18 victories at the United States Supreme Court and has worked to enact more than 60 laws nationwide.

As part of its work, PLF seeks to protect private property rights. In recent years, property owners have faced a growing problem with squatters occupying their homes without any legal entitlement to do so. For example, last year [Burrillville has reported having problems with unauthorized squatters on town property](#). And between 2020 and 2023, the number of court cases filed to removed squatters in New York rose from 9 to 37.

In reality, there are many most instances of this happening, but many property owners deal with squatters without filing an eviction action or other civil court action because of the time and expense of litigation. In one instance, [a Chicago homeowner paid squatters a \\$4,300 ransom](#) to leave his house because he didn't want to wait for 6 months – 1 year for a court decision.

But property owners should not be extorted in this way by illegal occupants. House Bill 8066 offers a straight forward solution to this problem. It simply clarifies that squatters are illegal occupants, not holdover tenants with a valid entitlement to private property. And it allows law enforcement to assist with removing an illegal tenant.

PLF has been researching this issue and supporting bills around the country like House Bill 8066 over the last few years. Our research shows that between [May 2024 and July 2025, 15 states criminalized squatting](#) and enacted legislation to address this problem. Today, 23 states (nearly half of states) have enacted legislation like this (See map below).



For these reasons, PLF urges this Committee's support for this bill. Please let me know if I can answer any questions.

Respectfully,

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