

D.C. Office of the Tenant Advocate
Historical Comparison of the “Rent Control CPI” and
the Social Security Cost of Living Adjustment

In January or February of each year, the Rental Housing Commission publishes the “rent control CPI” percentage based on the monthly US Bureau of Labor Statistics CPI-W (“Consumer Price Index for Workers”) for the greater DC metropolitan area.

The “rent control CPI” percentage determines the maximum standard annual rent increase for any rental unit in the District that is subject to rent control. The “rent control year” begins on May 1st of each year and ends on April 30th of the following year. For elderly tenants and tenants with disabilities, the maximum standard annual rent increase is equal to the “rent control CPI,” and for all other tenants, it is equal to the CPI + two (2) percent.

The federal Social Security Cost of Living Adjustment (SS COLA) is used to calculate the increase in a beneficiary’s Social Security income for each calendar year. Thus it is a significant point of comparison particularly for elderly tenants and tenants with disabilities who may live on fixed incomes.

The following is a list of the “rent control CPI” for each “rent control” year starting in 1985; the SS COLA that applies to each calendar year; and the difference between them during each calendar year. The “rent control year” coincides with the SS COLA calendar year from May 1st through December 31st, and coincides with the following SS COLA calendar year from January 1st through April 30th.

YEAR	Rent Control CPI-W (May – April)	SS COLA (Jan – Dec)	DIFFERENCE (Jan–April/ May–Dec)	
1985	4.4%	3.5%	--	+0.9%
1986	4.0%	3.1%	+1.3%	+0.9%
1987	1.6%	1.3%	+2.7%	+0.3%
1988	4.7%	4.2%	-2.6%	+0.5%
1989	4.6%	4.0%	+0.7%	+0.6%
1990	5.6%	4.7%	-0.1%	+0.9%
1991	5.4%	5.4%	+0.2%	=
1992	2.7%	3.7%	+1.7%	-1.0%
1993	2.9%	3.0%	-0.3%	-0.1%
1994	2.1%	2.6%	+0.3%	-0.5%
1995	1.7%	2.8%	-0.7%	-1.1%
1996	1.9%	2.6%	-0.9%	-0.7%
1997	2.8%	2.9%	-1.0%	-0.1%
1998	1.8%	2.1%	+0.7%	-0.3%
1999	1.0%	1.3%	+0.5%	-0.3%
2000	2.1%	2.5%	-1.5%	-0.4%
2001	3.3%	3.5%	-1.4%	-0.2%
2002	2.6%	2.6%	+0.7%	=
2003	2.1%	1.4%	+1.2%	+0.7%
2004	2.9%	2.1%	+0.2%	+0.8%
2005	2.7%	2.7%	+0.2%	=
2006	4.2%	4.1%	+0.1%	+0.3%
2007	3.5%	3.3%	+0.9%	+0.2%
2008	3.4%	2.3%	+1.2%	+1.1%
2009	4.8%	5.8%	-2.4%	-1.0%
2010	0.05%	0.0%	+0.05%	+4.8
2011	2.2%	0.0%	+0.05%	+2.2%
2012	3.6%	3.6%	+1.4%	=
2013	2.2%	1.7%	+1.9%	+0.5%
2014	1.4%	1.5%	+0.7%	-0.1%
2015	1.5%	1.7%	-0.3%	-0.2%
2016	0.0%	0.0%	NA	+1.5%