

In April 2024, when Luther arrived for his on-site walkthrough, he presented himself as a calm figure stepping onto the Florida property he claimed to know so well, yet rarely saw in person. As we moved past the sagging branches and approached the flimsy side gate—no latch, no lock, the wood splintered at its edges—I asked him about his profession. It felt natural, given the circumstances: he was a landlord who lived hundreds of miles away, a man who had shown so little urgency in addressing urgent hazards. The home invasion from weeks prior, facilitated by that very gate and those dim, faulty motion lights, still echoed in my mind. His demeanor, guarded and measured, suggested he was choosing each word carefully.

“I’m a lawyer,” Luther said, in a tone that allowed no further detail. He mentioned corporate law in passing, something about working in North Carolina, but offered no clarity on the scope or ethics of his practice. There was no explicit mention of handling Florida legal matters—no, his words stayed in safe territory. Still, the very admission that he was a licensed attorney raised the stakes. Here stood a man trained in the precise interpretation of laws, someone who should know better than to neglect statutory duties, someone who understood perfectly well what Fla. Stat. §§83.49, 83.51, and 715.10–715.111 demanded of him. And yet, rather than acting as a landlord committed to the standards and safety requirements these statutes imposed, he had persistently failed to comply.

Zach, the realtor who had been my local contact from the start, only solidified Luther’s background when we spoke privately. Zach described Luther’s multiple properties and hinted at aspirations of greater collaboration, clearly revealing a personal stake that might compromise his impartiality. For all Zach’s friendly demeanor, he had an interest in pleasing Luther—the non-resident landlord, the attorney with potential future listings—an interest that overshadowed any concern he might have voiced about my living conditions or security. Here was a potential conflict of interest that weighed heavily on my rights as a tenant. If Zach stood to gain from maintaining a favorable relationship with Luther, how could I rely on him to represent my concerns fairly?

Despite Luther’s legal credentials, he allowed the property to remain unsafe after a known violent home invasion. He failed to remedy the hazardous tree limbs hanging near electrical cables, or to ensure that the malfunctioning motion lights would do their job. He saw these things in person, looked upon them with his own eyes, and then, as if dismissing a minor inconvenience, simply moved on. For an attorney—someone well aware that neglecting maintenance and safety breaches clear statutory obligations—such inaction is more than an oversight. It is a calculated choice.

Luther’s awareness and silence are damning. He wasn’t just some uninformed landlord who didn’t know the rules; he was a trained legal

professional who opted to ignore them. His refusal to follow through on previously mentioned security improvements, like installing metal gates or ensuring functional lighting, placed me at ongoing risk and psychic distress. Each day that passed without action deepened my mistrust. It wasn't a matter of ignorance; it was willful neglect, a conscious decision to leave me with all the burdens the law meant for him to shoulder.

Moreover, even if Luther's position as a lawyer shielded him from accusations of misrepresenting his professional status, that does not absolve him of failing to uphold the very standards he, of all people, should understand intimately. He did not need to be a Florida-licensed attorney to know that common decency and statutory obligations are not optional. The out-of-state legal practice he maintained does not grant him immunity from Florida's landlord-tenant laws when he chooses to rent out property in that state. There's no excuse for the indifference he showed toward mandated maintenance duties, deposit handling procedures, and personal property protocols set forth in Florida Statutes.

Luther's relationship with Zach only heightens the concern. Zach, as the listing agent and the person who facilitated my entry into this lease, should have been a neutral party. Instead, he appears to be entangled in Luther's broader business interests. His potential future gains from working with Luther on subsequent transactions suggest that his priority might lean more toward pleasing the landlord than ensuring fair treatment for the tenant. This dynamic compromises the reliability of any communication or promises channeled through Zach.

In the end, Luther's credentials as a lawyer practicing outside of Florida, combined with the confirmation from Zach, do not ease the severity of his noncompliance with Florida's landlord-tenant statutes. Rather, they underscore the deliberate nature of his choices. He knew what was required—timely deposit notices, essential repairs to secure the premises, immediate responses to critical safety hazards—but chose not to fulfill these duties. While he may not have blatantly misrepresented his legal status, his willful negligence and refusal to adhere to statutory requirements cannot be excused by credentials or geography.

This is about a landlord, fully aware of the rules, intentionally failing to follow them. No matter his professional qualifications, he remains responsible for the safety, habitability, and legal compliance of the property he chose to rent out. No matter Zach's vested interests, such conflicts do not dilute the landlord's accountability. The statutes exist to protect tenants, and no out-of-state license or personal ambitions can alter that fact.

In conclusion, Luther's confirmed status as a lawyer with a Missouri Bar license and a corporate law background in North Carolina does not

mitigate the gravity of his failings in Florida. To the contrary, it magnifies the deliberate nature of his inaction. This is someone who cannot claim ignorance of legal obligations. The presence of Zach, who could have served as an impartial local resource, is instead tainted by his personal stake in pleasing Luther. All told, these factors compound the seriousness of the statutory violations, leaving no doubt that Luther's conduct was willfully noncompliant and harmful to my well-being as a tenant.