



Housing for people, not profit

Tenant

Inquilino

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PERIODICAL



'Clean Elections' Would Help Tenants

By Pamela Bennett

Landlords understand the importance of elections. In every election cycle, New York City landlords, developers, and landlord organizations contribute staggering amounts of money to political candidates. In 2006, real-estate interests contributed over \$9 million to statewide and legislative candidates, including upstate legislators who don't have a single rent-regulated apartment in their districts.

In the current political system, the only way for tenants to have real power and a voice with the legislature is to raise funds and be involved in elections. But that is certainly no easy task. Tenants will never be able to compete with the amount of money given by real-estate interests.

The solution is clear. Tenants and the many interests that represent the regular citizens of New York City and the state will only have a fair shot at getting their voices heard

in the Legislature if New York State enacts full public funding of campaigns. Candidates could then run for office without needing money from the wealthy special interests who fight every day for the decontrol of rent-regulated apartments.

Clean Elections is an option which allows candidates to qualify for public campaign funds—for both the primary and the general election—by raising a predetermined number of small donations from registered voters in their district. The candidates commit to running their campaigns without raising any additional funds from private donors, and they agree to spending caps and public disclosure. If they are being significantly outspent by a privately funded opponent, their public grant is increased so they can stay competitive.

How could it work? It's working successfully in Arizona and Maine, in North Carolina for judicial races, and this year, full public

funding of campaigns is an option for the candidates and voters in Connecticut. Janet Napolitano, the twice-elected governor of Arizona, credits the Clean Elections system in place there for her state's ability to negotiate with large pharmaceutical companies for lower drug prices.

How does it work now? We should call this the "free my legislator from the onerous task of fundraising" bill. Let's imagine that I decide to run for the state Assembly. I would have to spend the majority of my time sitting in a little room with a telephone, a list of donors, and inspirational sayings on the wall to keep me dialing for dollars, with an ever-watchful fundraiser at my side making suggestions as to what I could say to each person to motivate them into sending me a check. Every now and again, I could leave my little room to attend a high-ticket fundraiser where wealthy donors would talk to me about the things near and



Kidnapped Cat Survives Illegal Eviction
Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal and State Senator Tom Duane stand with Upper West Side tenant Paul Steinberg and his 17-year-old cat Bud on Jan. 31. See story on page 6.

dear to them. Perhaps by the end of the campaign, I would be able to appear at a supermarket or subway stop to ask voters for their support.

Under a system of full

public campaign financing, I could choose to go directly to the registered voters in my district and collect a predetermined

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California Tenants Fight to Save Rent Control

By Joe Catron

Emboldened by a national outcry against the use of eminent domain to seize property for private developments like Brooklyn's Atlantic Yards, California landlords have devised an ingenious attack on the state's local rent-control laws: Disguising a statewide referendum to ban them as a measure to reform eminent domain.

After the U.S. Supreme Court's controversial *Kelo v. City of New London* ruling in 2005, which allowed eminent-domain takings for private use, California landlords promoted Proposition 90, a deceptive proposal to weaken all public regulation of private property, including rent controls. It lost by a five-point margin in November 2006.

The landlords waited less than a month before introducing Proposition 98, dubbed the "California Property Owners and Farm-

land Protection Act" by its backers and the "Hidden Agendas Scheme" by tenant organizations and a broad range of other public-interest groups. Similar to Proposition 90 but even more destructive, Proposition 98 will appear on the state's June 3 ballot.

Proposition 98 ostensibly bans the taking of property for private use, but it defines "taking" to include "limiting the price a private owner may charge another person to purchase, occupy, or use his or her real property," and "private use" as "regulation of the ownership, occupancy, or use of privately owned real property or associated property rights in order to transfer an economic benefit to one or more private persons at the expense of another."

Californians for Property Rights Protection, the coalition backing Proposition 98, includes the Apartment Owners As-

sociation of California, the California Housing Providers Coalition, four mobile-home landlord associations, and four regional landlord organizations. UPI reports that landlords have poured nearly \$2 million into the effort, and Nan Brasmer, president of the California Alliance for Retired Americans, says that over 90 percent of the coalition's war chest has come from landlords.

California has no statewide rent-regulation system. A dozen cities currently have rent-control laws for residential buildings, and 110 localities extend ordinances to mobile home parks. Proposition 98 would end them all.

Rent controls there are already limited by the 1995 Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act. That state law, which only affects buildings, exempts all post-1995 units from local rent controls, pro-

hibits cities from extending their laws to cover previously uncontrolled units, exempts single-family homes and condominiums, and enables landlords to set initial rents for new tenants, even if future increases face regulation: the infamous "decontrol/recontrol" system.

Larry Gross, executive director of the Coalition for Economic Survival, a Los Angeles tenants' union

and community organization, warns that Proposition 98 would also attack even the meager rights of uncontrolled tenants. "What it basically says is that any laws cannot be maintained that impact the property values of owners," he says. "One could say that requiring a 60-day eviction notice does that. So it potentially has some broad-reaching impacts,

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Rent Campaign Launch Finds Global Resonance

By Joe Catron

The January 26 launch of the Real Rent Reform Campaign coincided with a global day of action called by the World Social Forum. The mobilization, with thousands of events on six continents, echoed the WSF's prior day of action in February 2003 against the impending Iraq war.

As part of their global "Act Together-Housing for All!" campaign, the Habitat International Coalition, the International Alliance of Inhabitants, and the Local Authorities Forum encouraged their international networks of tenant activists to press demands for decent, affordable housing. IAI coordinator Cesare Ottolini called Jan. 26 "an excellent opportunity for those fighting against evictions and for the promotion of housing security, against privatization and liberalization of the sector, for the development of the public housing service, against speculation and corruption and for the right to dignified housing at fair prices."

Tens of thousands seized the opportunity. Besides massive convergences addressing housing alongside other issues in France, Mexico, and elsewhere, the mobilization included a forum de-

manding "Safe Shelter for All" in Dhaka, Bangladesh; a rally for housing rights in Odintsovo, Russia; and a march in Fortaleza, Brazil celebrating "Water and Land as Human Rights."

In Atlanta, the site of the first U.S. Social Forum last year, the Georgia Citizens' Coalition on Hunger mobilized 400 low-income participants to protest at the Atlanta Housing Authority. They then marched to the state capitol in a Poor People's Day Caravan and Movement Assembly for health care, affordable housing, and an end to homelessness.

Low-income and homeless Philadelphians organized by the Kensington Welfare Rights Union held a candlelight vigil outside City Hall to claim their human rights to health care, housing, food, and education. They then marched through rush-hour traffic to join Military Families Speak Out and Veterans for Peace in a vigil outside a U.S. Army recruiting station.

Led by the People's Hurricane Relief Fund and Oversight Coalition, the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance coordinated several actions opposing the destruction of New Orleans' public housing

and supporting rent control. The largest was in San Francisco, where 200 tenant activists rallied outside Rep. Dianne Feinstein's mansion requesting her support for the Gulf Coast Housing Recovery Act. That bill would guarantee the replacement of all public housing destroyed by New Orleans' federally administered housing authority and require it to open roughly 3,000 units within 90 days.

In New York City, Community Voices Heard members held a New Orleans-style funeral march, complete with a band. Dressed in black, they carried a coffin from Hillary Clinton's Midtown campaign office to a Barack Obama rally in Columbus Circle, demand-

ing that the candidates address Gulf Coast reconstruction, housing, jobs, and other issues affecting low-income Americans.

Finding decent, affordable housing is rarely easy for working people anywhere, but the world's slumlords and gentrifiers have never made it more difficult than when their nasty enterprises face no organized resistance. As we mount this resistance locally, Met Council and its allies in the fight to win home rule, end vacancy decontrol, save Mitchell-Lama and Section 8, and really reform the rent laws clearly stand in good company.

Council Votes to Bar Discrimination Against Section 8 Tenants

On Jan. 30, the City Council passed a bill that bars landlords from discriminating against renters because of their legal source of income. The measure, sponsored by Councilmember Bill de Blasio (D-Brooklyn), is aimed at owners who refuse to rent apartments to people receiving Section 8 subsidies, Social Security, or public assistance.

The bill passed by a 39-8 vote, but tenant activists want to ensure that it retains enough support to override a probable mayoral veto. The real-estate lobby opposed it,

and three leading Council Democrats—Leroy Comrie and Peter Vallone Jr. of Queens and Erik Martin Dilan of Brooklyn—joined the Council's three Republicans in voting against it.

Activists are focusing on five Councilmembers who either opposed the bill, have shown signs of wavering, or have not taken a clear position: James Vacca of the Bronx, James Gennaro of Queens, Michael McMahon of Staten Island, and Jessica Lappin and Inez Dickens of Manhattan.

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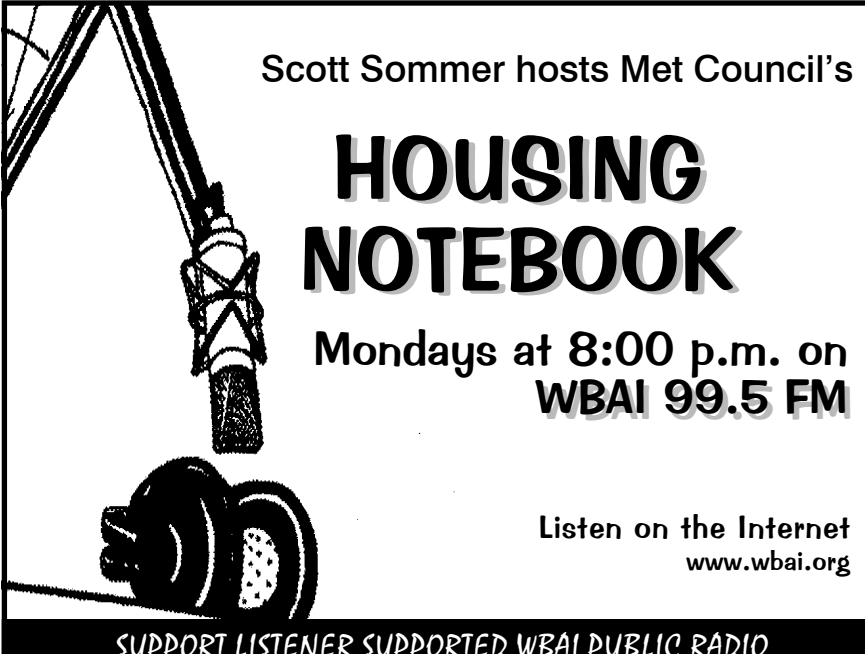
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- ✓ how to get repairs
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- ✓ the fight for home rule
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and much more!

Get active in the tenant movement! Write to us at active@metcouncil.net



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EL INQUILINO HISPANO

‘Elecciones limpias’ ayudarían a los inquilinos

Por Pamela Bennett

Traducido por Lightning Translations

Los caseros entienden lo importante que son las elecciones. En cada ciclo de elecciones, los caseros, especuladores y organizaciones de caseros en la Ciudad de Nueva York contribuyen asombrosas cantidades de dinero a candidatos políticos. En 2006, los intereses de bienes raíces contribuyeron más de \$9 millones a postulantes a puestos de todo el estado y la legislatura, incluidos legisladores del norte del estado que no tienen ni un solo apartamento de renta regulada en sus distritos.

En el sistema político actual, la única manera en que los inquilinos pueden tener algún poder real y una voz en la legislatura es hacer colectas de fondos y participar en las elecciones. Por cierto, esta es una tarea nada fácil. Los inquilinos nunca podrán competir con la cantidad de dinero otorgada por los intereses de bienes raíces.

La solución es clara. Los inquilinos y los muchos intereses que representan a los ciudadanos comunes y corrientes de la Ciudad

de Nueva York y el estado solamente tendrán una oportunidad pareja para hacer oír sus voces en la Legislatura si el Estado de Nueva York promulga el financiamiento público completo de campañas. Así, los candidatos podrían postularse sin necesitar el dinero de los acaudalados intereses especiales que luchan todos los días por el descontrol de los apartamentos de renta regulada.

Elecciones Limpias es una opción que permite a los candidatos llenar los requisitos para fondos de campaña públicos (tanto para las elecciones primarias como para las generales) al reunir una cantidad determinada de antemano de pequeñas contribuciones de votantes inscritos en sus distritos. Los candidatos se comprometen a conducir sus campañas sin recibir más fondos adicionales de donantes particulares, y se acuerdan topes de gastos y la revelación al público. Si sus gastos son rebasados significativamente por los de un oponente financiado por intereses particulares, se aumenta

su beca pública para que puedan mantenerse competitivos.

¿Cómo puede funcionar? Está funcionando exitosamente en Arizona y Maine, además de en Carolina del Norte para comicios judiciales. También, este año el financiamiento público completo de campañas es una opción para candidatos y votantes en Connecticut. Janet Napolitano, elegida dos veces para ser gobernadora de Arizona, atribuye al sistema de Elecciones Limpias establecido allá el hecho que el estado pueda negociar con las grandes compañías farmacéuticas para obtener precios más bajos de medicamentos.

¿Cómo funciona actualmente? Deberíamos llamar esto el proyecto de ley “liberar a mi legislador de la tarea pesada de reunir fondos”. Imaginemos que yo decido postularme para la Asamblea estatal. Tendría que pasar la mayor parte del tiempo sentada en un pequeño cuarto con un teléfono, una lista de donantes y refranes en la pared que me inspiren a seguir

marcando para conseguir dólares, con un vigilante recaudador de fondos a mi lado, haciendo sugerencias en torno a lo que podría decir a cada persona para motivarle a enviarme un cheque. De vez en cuando, podría dejar mi pequeño cuarto para asistir a un evento de recaudación de fondos de alto costo donde los donantes acaudalados me hablarían acerca de sus mayores y más soñados deseos. Tal vez hacia el fin de la campaña podría aparecer en un supermercado o una parada del metro para pedir su apoyo a los votantes.

Bajo un sistema de financiamiento público completo de campañas, podría elegir acercarme directamente a los votantes inscritos en mi distrito y coleccionar una cantidad determinada de antemano de pequeñas contribuciones para mi campaña. En su legislación de Elecciones Limpias, Connecticut sólo acepta contribuciones hasta de \$100. Entonces

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Los Ajustes de la “Junta de Regulación de Renta” de la Ciudad de Nueva York (Orden No. 39)

Para los contratos de apartamentos de Renta Estabilizada que comienzan el 1ro. de octubre de 2007 hasta el 30 de septiembre de 2008.

Renovación de Contrato

Los caseros tienen que ofrecer a los inquilinos de renta estabilizada una renovación de contrato dentro de 90 a 120 días antes de que venza su contrato actual. La renovación de contrato tiene que mantener los mismos términos y condiciones que el contrato que vencerá, excepto cuando refleje un cambio en la ley. Una vez que se haya recibido el ofrecimiento de renovación, los inquilinos tienen 60 días para aceptarlo y escoger si van a renovar el contrato por uno o dos años. El propietario tiene que devolver la copia firmada y fechada al inquilino dentro de 30 días. La nueva renta no entrará en vigencia hasta que empiece el nuevo contrato, o cuando el propietario devuelva la copia firmada (lo que suceda después). Ofrecimientos retrasados: si el casero ofrece la renovación tarde (menos de 90 días antes de que venza el contrato actual), el contrato puede empezar, a la opción del inquilino, o en la fecha que hubiera empezado si se hubiera hecho un ofrecimiento a tiempo, o en el primer pago de renta fechada 90 días después de la fecha del ofrecimiento del contrato. Las pautas de renta usadas para la renovación no pueden ser mayores que los incrementos de la RGB vigentes en la fecha en que el contrato debía empezar (si se lo hubiera ofrecido a tiempo). El inquilino no tiene que pagar el nuevo aumento de renta hasta 90 días después de que se haya hecho el ofrecimiento.

Asignación de Subarriendo

Los caseros podrán cobrar un aumento de 10 por ciento durante el término de subarriendo que comience durante este período de las pautas.

Programa de Exención de Incrementos de Renta para las Personas de Mayor Edad Las personas de mayor edad con renta estabilizada (y los que viven en apartamentos de renta controlada, Mitchell-Lama y cooperativas de dividendos limitados), con 62 años o más, y cuyos ingresos familiares disponibles al año sean de \$27,000 o menos (para 2006) y que paguen (o enfrenten un aumento de renta que les haría pagar) un tercio o más de aquel ingreso en renta pueden ser elegibles para una congelación de renta. Solicite a: NYC Dept of the Aging, SCRIE Unit, 2 Lafayette St., NY, NY 10007 o llame al 311 o visite su sitio Web, nyc.gov/html/dfta/html/scrie_sp/scrie_sp.shtml.

Programa de Exención de Incrementos de Renta para Minusválidos Inquilinos con renta regulada que reciben ayuda económica elegible relacionada con discapacidad, que tengan ingresos de \$17,580 o menos para individuales y \$25,212 o menos para una pareja y enfrenten rentas iguales o más de un tercio de sus ingresos pueden ser elegibles para un congelamiento de renta. Solicite a: NYC Dept. of Finance, DRIE Exemptions, 59 Maiden Lane - 20th floor, New York, NY 10038. Llame al 311 para una solicitud o vaya al sitio Web en www.nyc.gov/html/dof/html/property/property_tax_reduc_drie.shtml

Las unidades desvanes
Los aumentos legalizados para unidades

Tipo de Contrato	Renta Legal Actual	Contrato de 1 Año	Contrato de 2 Años	
Renovación del Contrato	Todos	3%	5.75%	
Contratos para Apartamentos Vacíos	Más de \$500	Incrementos por desocupación cobrados en los últimos 8 años	17.25%	20%
		Incrementos por desocupación no cobrados en los últimos 8 años	0.6% por el número de años desde el último incremento por estar vacío, más el 17.25%	0.6% por el número de años desde el último incremento por estar vacío, más el 20%
	Menos de \$300	Incrementos por desocupación cobrados en los últimos 8 años	17.25% + \$100	20% + \$100
		Incrementos por desocupación no cobrados en los últimos 8 años	0.6% por el número de años desde el último incremento por estar vacío, + 175% + \$100	0.6% por el número de años desde el último incremento por estar vacío, + 20% + \$100
	Renta de \$300 a \$500	Incrementos por desocupación cobrados en los últimos 8 años	17.25% o \$100, lo que sea mayor	20% o \$100, lo que sea mayor
		Incrementos por desocupación no cobrados en los últimos 8 años	0.6% por el número de años desde el último incremento por estar vacío, mas 17.25%, o \$100, lo que sea mayor	0.6% por el número de años desde el último incremento por estar vacío, mas 20%, o \$100, lo que sea mayor

de desván son un 2.5 por ciento por un contrato de un año y 5.25 por ciento por dos años. No se permiten incrementos para las unidades de desván vacías.

Hoteles y SROs

El aumento es un 0 por ciento de la renta cobrada el 30 de septiembre de 2007 para los apartamentos de hotel de clase A, casas de alojamiento, hoteles de clase B (30 o más habitaciones), hoteles de una sola habitación y pensiones (clase B, 6-29 habitaciones).

Exceso de cobro

Los inquilinos deben estar al tanto de que muchos caseros se aprovecharán de las complejidades de estas pautas y concesiones adicionales, además del poco conocimiento de los inquilinos del historial de renta de sus apartamentos,

para cobrar una renta ilegal. Los inquilinos pueden impugnar los aumentos de renta sin autorización en las cortes o al presentar una impugnación con la agencia estatal de vivienda, la División de Vivienda y Renovación Comunitaria (Division of Housing and Community Renewal, DHCR). El primer paso en el proceso es ponerse en contacto con la DHCR para ver el registro oficial del historial de renta. Vaya a www.dhcr.state.ny.us o llame al 718-739-6400 y pida un historial de renta detallado. Luego, hable con un abogado o defensor experto antes de seguir.

Para las pautas previas, llame a la RGB al 212-385-2934 o vaya al www.housingnyc.com

Inquilinos frustran complot de los Shalom para matar a gatos

Por Steven Wishnia

Traducido por Lightning Translations

En la última acción de la familia casera Shalom para escandalizar a los inquilinos, el residente del Upper West Side Paul Steinberg regresó a su hogar de un viaje a fines de enero y descubrió que todas sus pertenencias habían sido sacadas de su apartamento y que sus cuatro gatos de edad avanzada habían desaparecido.

Steinberg tenía planeado mudarse del edificio en 244 oeste de la calle 72 al fin del mes, cuando su contrato de arrendamiento se venciera. Sin embargo, su casero, Fred Shalom (también conocido como Faramarz Ohebshalom), aparentemente no fue lo suficientemente paciente para esperar una semana más. Así que mientras Steinberg estaba fuera de la ciudad visitando a su hermana, los trabajadores de Shalom entraron en su apartamento, botaron sus pertenencias y mandaron a sus gatos al departamento municipal de control de animales para ser matados.

Afortunadamente, los vecinos de Steinberg le avisaron a tiempo para que él pudiera rescatar a los gatos. Los vecinos habían visto a los trabajadores llevándose los. Al principio, el despacho de Shalom "negó tener conocimiento alguno" de los hechos, pero más adelante admitió que el aparta-

mento había sido "programado para limpieza", afirma David Fanzo de la Alianza de Inquilinos de Shalom (Shalom Tenants Alliance). "Desafortunadamente, no hubo mucho que pudiera hacer en torno a sus pertenencias".

El 31 de enero, alrededor de 40 inquilinos de Shalom, sus defensores y funcionarios elegidos se reunieron fuera del edificio para exigir que se enjuicie al casero.

"Estoy ofendido y escandalizado porque los Shalom se hayan rebajado al nivel de botar mis pertenencias personales y mandar a mis gatos al corral municipal a escasos días antes de que mi contrato se venciera", dijo Steinberg. "Si no fuera por los esfuerzos valientes de mis vecinos para alertarme de lo que había pasado a mis mascotas, podrían haber sido víctimas de la eutanasia el lunes. El fiscal Morgenthau debe enjuiciar a este casero para prevenir que otras personas (y sus mascotas) sean víctimas de los Shalom y sus tácticas".

"Es inconcebible que un casero viole la seguridad de tu hogar, robe tus pertenencias y eche a tus mascotas al corral municipal", dijo a la multitud la Asambleísta Linda Rosenthal (demócrata/Partido de Familias-Manhattan). "Edificio tras edificio, los Shalom han

aterrorizado e intimidado a sus inquilinos, forzándoles a mudarse y desreglamentando los apartamentos. Es un modelo de negocios totalmente criminal".

Fred Shalom es dueño de parte de más de 130 edificios en la ciudad; la familia, que opera bajo tales nombres como Sky Management y Empire Management, tiene muy mala fama por hostigar a los inquilinos. Los inquilinos del 244 oeste de la calle 72 dicen que han vivido sin gas para cocinar ni servicios de lavandería desde el 8 de enero. En 2004, los Shalom privaron de gas a los inquilinos de 8 St. Marks Place

por casi todo el año.

La policía municipal dijo a la asociación de inquilinos que están haciendo una indagación criminal del incidente; Steinberg está demandando a la administración del edificio en la Corte Suprema Estatal. La oficina del fiscal de Manhattan Robert Morgenthau también está investigando a la familia Shalom y sus prácticas.

Un abogado por los Shaloms dijo a la WNYW-TV que los manifestantes eran "inquilinos malhumorados y políticos demasiado fervorosos".

'Elecciones limpias'

viene de la página 3

llenaría los requisitos para recibir una beca pública para la elección primaria y, ganada ésta, para la elección general. Podría, pues, pasar el resto del tiempo hablando a los votantes en mi distrito sobre los asuntos que más les importan. Además, y lo más importante, sería responsable sólo ante los votantes en mi distrito.

El sistema actual de financiamiento de campañas da a los intereses especiales una influencia indebida en las políticas públicas. Ha impedido que legislación importante se aprobara y ha bloqueado soluciones reales a los severos problemas que los neoyorquinos enfrentan. Sabemos que la vivienda asequible en la Ciudad de Nueva York está desapareciendo. Sabemos que los especuladores e intereses de bienes raíces contribuyeron más de \$9 millones a postulantes a puestos de todo el estado y la legislatura en 2006. También creemos que el financiamiento público completo de campañas en el Estado de Nueva York sería un paso importante hacia la solución de la crisis de vivienda asequible.

¿Qué puede hacer usted para

ayudar? Acción de Ciudadanos de Nueva York (Citizen Action of New York) está trabajando con miembros de la Legislatura para nivelar el campo de los comicios para todos los neoyorquinos. Estamos alentándoles a redactar y aprobar legislación este año para establecer una opción del financiamiento público completo de campañas.

Con el financiamiento público completo de campañas y los ejércitos de defensores de inquilinos de base trabajando para conseguir la elección de candidatos en pro de los inquilinos, la Ciudad de Nueva York podría ser una vez más la Meca de familias trabajadoras, ancianos y jóvenes que actualmente están siendo desplazados.

Pamela Bennett es directora de Acción de Ciudadanos de la Ciudad de Nueva York, (212) 523-0180; www.citizenactionny.org. Para participar, póngase en contacto con kguild@citizenactionny.org. Llame a su legislador(a) y dígame que usted apoya Elecciones Limpias: financiamiento público completo de campañas.

Hotline Volunteers Needed!

Our phones are ringing off the hook! Met Council is looking for people to counsel tenants on our hotline. We will train you! The hotline runs on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 1:30-5 p.m. If you can give one afternoon a week for this crucial service to the tenant community, call Jenny at (212) 979-6238 x3.

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Sign up for Met Council's e-mail alerts and get notices of rallies, hearings, and other important actions for tenants' rights and affordable housing.

www.metcouncil.net

No se quede helado: ¡ORGANÍZASE!



La ley requiere que su casero proporcione calefacción y agua caliente a las temperaturas siguientes, desde el 1ro de octubre hasta el 31 de mayo:

Desde las 6 a.m. hasta las 10 p.m.:
Si la temperatura afuera es de menos de 55 grados, la temperatura adentro debe ser al menos de 68 grados en todo el apartamento.

Desde las 10 p.m. hasta las 6 a.m.:
Si la temperatura afuera es de menos de 40 grados, la temperatura adentro debe ser al menos de 55 grados en todo el apartamento.

Se tiene que proporcionar agua caliente a un mínimo de 120 grados en el grifo las 24 horas del día, todo el año.

Si su casero no mantiene estas temperaturas mínimas, usted debe:

- * Comenzar una "Acción HP" (HP Action) en la Corte de Vivienda. Pida una inspección por orden de la corte y una Orden de Corrección (Order to Correct)
- * Llamar al Buro Central de Quejas (Central Control Bureau) de la ciudad de Nueva York al 311 inmediatamente, para documentar la violación del casero. Llame repetidamente. Se supone que un inspector vendrá eventualmente, aunque a veces no lo haga.
- * Exhortar a los otros inquilinos en el edificio a llamar al Central Complaint. Todos deben llamar repetidamente, al menos una vez al día, todos los días en que tengan problemas con la calefacción.
- * Comprar un buen termómetro para afuera y adentro, para documentar las fechas exactas, las horas, y las temperaturas, tanto afuera como adentro, mientras tenga problemas con la calefacción. Esta documentación es su evidencia
- * Llamar a la División de Vivienda y Renovación Comunal del Estado de Nueva York (DHCR, por sus siglas en inglés) al (718) 739-6400, y pedir que le envíen el formulario de Queja de Calefacción y Agua Caliente. Llene el formulario y consiga la participación de todos los

inquilinos en su edificio que pueden firmarlo. Reclame una orden para restaurar la calefacción y el agua caliente, y que se reduzcan y congelen (¡disculpe lo de "congelen"! todas las rentas.

- * Necesitarán una fuerte asociación de inquilinos para obligar al casero a proporcionar calefacción y agua caliente. Escriban y llamen al casero para demandar reparaciones y aceite. Prepárense para una huelga de renta (sobre todo con asesoría legal)—de relámpago si es necesario.

Las leyes sobre la calefacción establecen también:

- * Que el Departamento de Reparaciones de Emergencia de la ciudad le proporcione la calefacción si el casero no lo hace. (No se siente en un bloque de hielo—otra vez, ¡disculpe!—mientras espere que lo haga.)
- * Una multa de \$250 to \$500 al casero por cada día que se produzca la violación. (Pero la verdad es que la Corte de Vivienda raras veces impone las multas, y menos aun las cobra).
- * Una multa de \$1,000 al casero si algún aparato de control automático se instala en la caldera para mantener la temperatura por debajo del mínimo legal.
- * Si el tanque de combustible de la caldera está vacío, los inquilinos tienen el derecho de comprar su propio combustible después de haber pasado 24 horas sin calefacción y también sin obtener ninguna respuesta del casero. Esto no se aplica si la caldera está rota y necesita tanto reparación como combustible.

¡Cuidado! ¡proteja su dinero! Si los inquilinos deciden comprar el combustible, hay que seguir los procedimientos legales cuidadosamente. Consiga la ayuda y el consejo de un organizador de inquilinos. La existencia de leyes de calefacción y agua caliente vigentes no garantiza que el gobierno las implemente. No se quede helado por esperar que la ciudad o el estado actúe. ¡Organízes!

East Harlem Fights Displacement

By Sam J. Miller

Gentrification is proceeding at a breakneck pace in East Harlem. Vacant buildings boarded up for decades are being transformed into cushy new developments. Almost every block has at least one site under development, with big banners proudly announcing the arrival of LUXURY CONDOS. Innumerable low-income tenants are facing landlords attempting to push them out. Two supermarkets that serve low-income folks have closed, and a third is about to be evicted. And according to the city Department of Homeless Services, East Harlem is one of the five neighborhoods that sends the most homeless families into the shelter system.

But East Harlem isn't taking it lying down. Several grass-roots groups, community development corporations, tenant associations, and concerned citizens have banded together to form an East Harlem Anti-Displacement Task Force.

"We have joined the East Harlem/El Barrio East Harlem Task Force because we share a deep concern and feel compelled to address the impact the housing crisis is having on the poor and working people of our communities. Our collaboration serves as a clarion call for housing policies that address the need for permanent low-income housing," says City Councilmember Melissa Mark-Viverito, a key supporter. "It's never too late to work together to come up with an action plan that will allow us to resist ruthless landlords, investors, and developers attempting to displace the low-income and working-class members of our community through illegal evictions, illegal rent increases, failure to repair violations."

Other players include Picture the Homeless, HOPE Community Inc., Community Voices Heard, the tenants associations at the Dewitt Clinton and James Weldon

Johnson Houses, and the Latin King and Queen Nation. Since December, the Task Force has convened three major events: two marches and a town hall meeting, each of which mobilized hundreds of area residents.

"As a resident of this community, I'm truly concerned because of the changing surroundings, the rising cost of housing," says Ethel Velez, director of the New York City Public Housing Resident Alliance and president of the tenant association at the James

Weldon Johnson Houses. "I think it's great that all of these folks have been pulled to the table. So many times when it comes to housing, everything's treated individually and separately, and different groups act out of self-interest—but this is more focused on community."

The town-hall meeting took place at Taíno Towers Jan. 15, Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday. "It was especially important to engage in social advocacy on such an historically significant date," says HOPE Community, Inc. executive director Robin LeBaron, "as it reflects an era when people worked collectively to address poverty and injustice."

Accepting support from the Latin Kings and Queens caused some controversy. The media and the Police Department mounted a fear-mongering campaign against their involvement, but the Task Force participants stood behind

them, pointing out that they were part of our community, and they were affected by displacement as much as anyone. The Kings and Queens turned out at least 100 people for the Christmas march and took charge of key roles ranging from security to handing out flyers and getting neighborhood residents to join.

The Task Force is still in its early stages, still figuring out its overall goals and the best set of strategies to stop displacement and ensure that the development of East Harlem benefits the folks who have spent their whole lives

making it into a vibrant and attractive community. For now, the central mission is to take all the outrage that has been building up for the past ten years and focus it into a dynamic and effective movement against displacement.

At an early meeting, some participants urged us to hold our protests at City Hall or some other downtown target, because "the press won't come above 110th Street." Others argued that it was more important to hit the streets and start agitating, showing community residents that the time had come to stand against the tide of displacement. Our Three Kings Day march, which mobilized nearly 300 people from every imaginable sector of the community and drew a substantial press response, proved that East Harlem is waking up and fighting back, and people are paying attention.

Sam J. Miller is a housing organizer at Picture the Homeless.



East Harlem tenants protest on Three Kings Day.



The law requires your landlord provide heat and hot water at the following levels from October 1 through May 31:

From 6 am to 10 pm: If the outside temperature falls below 55 degrees, the inside temperature must be at least 68 degrees everywhere in your apartment.

From 10 pm to 6 am: If the outside temperature falls below 40 degrees, the inside temperature must be at least 55 degrees everywhere in your apartment.

Hot water at a minimum 120 degrees at the tap must be provided 24 hours a day, year round.

If your landlord does not maintain those minimum temperatures, you should:

- * Start an "HP action" in Housing Court. Ask for a court-ordered inspection and an Order to Correct.
- * Call the New York City Central Complaints Bureau at 311 immediately to record the landlord's violation. Call repeatedly. An inspector should eventually come, although sometimes they don't.
- * Get other tenants in your building to call Central Complaint. Everybody should call repeatedly, at least once every day the condition is not corrected.
- * Buy a good indoor/outdoor thermometer and keep a chart of the exact dates, times, and temperature readings, inside and out, so long as the condition is not corrected. The chart is your evidence.
- * Call the New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal at (718) 739-6400 and ask them to send you their Heat and Hot Water complaint form.

Get as many other apartments as possible in your building to sign on, demanding an order restoring heat and hot water, and a reduction and freeze (pardon the expression!) in all the rents.

You'll need a strong tenant association to force the landlord to provide heat and hot water. Write and call the landlord and demand repairs or fuel.

Prepare to go on rent strike—but get legal advice first.

The heat laws also provide for:

- * The city's Emergency Repair Department to supply your heat if the landlord does not. (Try waiting for this one!)
- * A \$250 to \$500 a day fine to the landlord for every day of violation. (But the Housing Court rarely imposes these fines, let alone collects them.)
- * A \$1,000 fine to the landlord if an automatic control device is put on the boiler to keep the temperature below the lawful minimum.

If your boiler's fuel tank is empty, tenants have the right to buy their own fuel after 24 hours of no heat and no response from the landlord. But this provision does not apply if the boiler is broken and needs both repairs and fuel.

Caution! Protect your money! If you decide to buy fuel, you must follow special lawful procedures very carefully. You should get help and advice from a tenant organizer.

Because the heat and hot water laws are in the law books does not mean they are enforced by government. Don't freeze to death waiting for the city or state to act. Organize!

Inquilinos de mayor edad y minusválidos

Las personas mayores de 62 años o más, en vivienda de renta regulada, Mitchell-Lama y algunos otros programas, con ingresos disponibles anuales de familia de \$27,000 o menos (el año pasado) y quienes pagan (o enfrentan un aumento de renta que les obligaría a pagar) un tercio o más de estos ingresos en renta pueden llenar los requisitos para una Exención de Incrementos de Renta para las Personas de Mayor Edad (Senior Citizen Rent Exemption, SCRIE). Solicítela a:

The NYC Dept. of the Aging
SCRIE Unit
2 Lafayette Street, NY, NY 10007

Los inquilinos minusválidos que reciben ayuda financiera relacionada con invalidez y tienen ingresos de \$17,580 o menos para individuos y \$25,323 o menos para una pareja y quienes enfrentan rentas iguales a o más de un tercio de sus ingresos pueden llenar los requisitos para la Exención de Incrementos de Renta para Minusválidos (Disability Rent Increase Exemption, DRIE). Solicítela a:

NYC Dept. of Finance
DRIE Exemptions
59 Maiden Lane – 20th Floor
New York, NY 10038

La información sobre DRIE y SCRIE está disponible en el sitio Web de la ciudad, www.nyc.gov, o llame a 311.

Tenants Foil Shalom Plot to Kill Cats

By Steven Wishnia

In the latest action by the Shalom landlord family to outrage tenants, Upper West Side resident Paul Steinberg came home from a trip in late January to find his possessions gone from his apartment and his four elderly cats missing.

Steinberg had been planning to move out of the building at 244 West 72nd St. at the end of the month, when his lease expired. But his landlord, Fred Shalom (aka Faramarz Ohebshalom), apparently wasn't patient enough to wait another week. So while Steinberg was away visiting his sister, Shalom workers entered his apartment, threw his belongings out, and sent his cats to the city animal-control department to be killed.

Fortunately, Steinberg's neighbors warned him in time for him to rescue the

cats. They had seen the workers removing them. At first, Shalom's office "disavowed any knowledge," but it later admitted that the apartment had been "slated for cleanup," says David Faranzo of the Shalom Tenants Alliance. "Unfortunately, there wasn't much he could do about his property."

On Jan. 31, about 40 Shalom tenants, their supporters, and elected officials gathered outside the building to demand that the landlord be prosecuted.

"I am offended and outraged that the Shaloms would stoop to the level of throwing out my personal belongings and sending my cats to the pound only a few days before my lease expired," said Steinberg. "If not for the courageous efforts of my neighbors to alert me of what had hap-

pened to my pets, they might have been euthanized on Monday. District Attorney Morgenthau should prosecute this landlord in order to prevent other people (and their pets) from falling victim to the Shaloms and their tactics."

"It's unthinkable to have a landlord violate the security of your home, steal your possessions, and toss your pets into the pound," said Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal (D/WFP-Manhattan) told the crowd. "Building

after building, the Shaloms have terrorized and intimidated their tenants, driving them out and deregulating apartments. It's a business model that is utterly criminal."

Fred Shalom owns part of more than 130 buildings in the city, and the family—which operates under names such as Sky Management and Empire Management—is notorious for harassing tenants. Tenants at 244 W. 72nd St. say they have been living without cooking gas or laundry since Jan. 8. In 2004, the

Shaloms deprived tenants at 8 St. Marks Place of gas for nearly the whole year.

City police told the tenants association that they are doing a criminal investigation of the incident, and Steinberg is suing management in State Supreme Court. Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau's office has also been investigating the Shalom family and its practices.

A lawyer for the Shaloms told WNYW-TV that the protesters were "disgruntled tenants and overzealous politicians."

NYC Rent Guidelines Board Adjustments (Order No. 39)

for Rent Stabilized Leases commencing Oct. 1, 2007 through Sept. 30, 2008

Lease Type	Current Legal Rent	One-year Lease	Two-year Lease	
Renewal Leases	All	3%	5.75%	
Vacancy leases	More than \$500	Vacancy allowance charged within last 8 years	17.25%	20%
		No vacancy allowance charged within last 8 years	0.6% times number of years since last vacancy allowance, plus 17.25%	0.6% times number of years since last vacancy allowance, plus 20%
	Less than \$300	Vacancy allowance charged within last 8 years	17.25% plus \$100	20% plus \$100
		No vacancy allowance charged within last 8 years	0.6% times number of years since last vacancy allowance, plus 17.25% plus \$100	0.6% times number of years since last vacancy allowance, plus 20% plus \$100
	Rent \$300 to \$500	Vacancy allowance charged within last 8 years	17.25% or \$100, whichever is greater	20% or \$100, whichever is greater
		No vacancy allowance charged within last 8 years	0.6% times number of years since last vacancy allowance, plus 17.25%, or \$100, whichever	0.6% times number of years since last vacancy allowance, plus 20%, or \$100, whichever is greater

Renewal Leases

Landlords must offer rent-stabilized tenants a renewal lease 90 to 120 days before the expiration of their current lease. The renewal lease must keep the same terms and conditions as the expiring lease, except when reflecting a change in the law. Once the renewal offer is received, tenants have 60 days to accept it and choose whether to renew the lease for one or two years. The owner must return the signed and dated copy to the tenant in 30 days. The new rent does not go into effect until the start of the new lease term, or when the owner returns the signed copy (whichever is later). Late offers: If the owner offers the renewal late (fewer than 90 days before the expiration of the current lease), the lease term can begin, at the tenant's option, either on the date it would have begun had a timely offer been made, or on the first rent payment date 90 days after the date of the lease offer. The rent guidelines used for the renewal can be no greater than the RGB increases in effect on the date the lease should have begun (if timely offered). The tenant does not have to pay the new rent increase until 90 days after the offer was made.

Sublease Allowance

Landlords can charge a 10 percent increase during the term of a sublease that commences during this guideline period.

Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption Program

Rent-stabilized seniors (and those living in rent-controlled, Mitchell-Lama, and limited equity coop apartments), 62 or older, whose disposable annual household income is \$27,000 or less (for 2006) and who pay (or face a rent increase that would cause them to pay) one-third or more of that income in rent may be eligible for a rent freeze. Apply to: NYC Dept. for the Aging, SCRIE Unit, 2 Lafayette St., NY, NY 10007 or call 311 or visit their Web site, www.nyc.gov/html/dfta/html/scrie/scrie.shtml.

Disability Rent Increase Exemption Program

Rent-regulated tenants receiving eligible disability-related financial assistance who have incomes of \$17,580 or less for individuals and \$25,212 or less for a couple and are facing rents equal to more than one-third of their income may be eligible for a rent freeze. Apply to: NYC Dept. of Finance, DRIE Exemptions, 59 Maiden Lane, 20th floor, New York, NY 10038. Call 311 for an application or go to the Web site at www.nyc.gov/html/dof/html/property/property_tax_reduc_drie.shtml.

Loft Units

Legalized loft-unit increases are 2.5 percent for a one-year lease and 5.25 percent for two years. No vacancy allowance is permitted on vacant lofts.

Hotels and SROs

There is no increase on rent charged September 30, 2007 for Class A apartment hotels, lodging houses, Class B hotels (30 rooms or more), single room occupancy (SRO) hotels, and rooming houses (Class B, 6-29 rooms).

Rent Overcharges

Tenants should be aware that many landlords will exploit the complexities of these guidelines and bonuses—and the tenant's unfamiliarity with the apartment's rent history—to charge an illegal rent. Tenants can challenge unauthorized rent increases through the courts or by filing a challenge with the state housing agency, the Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR). The first step in the process is to contact the DHCR to see the official record of the rent history. Go to www.dhcr.state.ny.us or call (718) 739-6400 and ask for a detailed rent history. Then speak to a knowledgeable advocate or a lawyer before proceeding.

For previous guidelines, call the RGB at (212) 385-2934 or go to www.housingnyc.com.



Protest Stalls Boston Eviction

A Florida finance company postponed the Jan. 24 eviction of a Boston woman whose home had been foreclosed after several dozen protesters showed up and stopped a constable from removing her and her possessions. The action was organized by City Life/Vida Urbana, a community group that has pledged to stop the eviction of 75 former owners and tenants in other foreclosed buildings. It

was the second time City Life/Vida Urbana has successfully mobilized to stall an impending eviction.

"We are urging mass resistance to these evictions," organizer Steve Meachem told the *Boston Globe*. "After all these mortgage seams, the banks have no right to disrupt people's lives like this." The group wants the buildings sold to nonprofits and used for affordable housing.

Atlantic Yards Foes Lose Appeal

A federal appeals court Feb. 1 denied 14 Brooklynites' attempt to stop Forest City Ratner from seizing their homes and businesses for the Atlantic Yards project. The 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a lower-court decision that taking the property under eminent domain would not be unconstitutional, as the construction of a sports arena and housing was a legitimate public purpose.

"The court today affirmed that the government is free to take private homes and businesses and give them to influential citizens as long as one can imagine a conceivable benefit to the public, no matter how small or unlikely it may be," Matthew Brinckerhoff, the plaintiffs' lawyer, said in a statement. The project's foes argued that its main benefit would

be to Ratner's profits, as the amounts of jobs and affordable housing it would create are exaggerated.

The decision was the second legal victory for Ratner in the past month. On Jan. 11, State Supreme Court Joan A. Madden ruled against a coalition of community groups challenging the state's approval of an environmental-impact statement for the project.

The litigation may be causing financial problems for Ratner, however. In late January, the developer filed an affidavit urging the courts to consider the appeal of Madden's decision quickly, as "there is a serious question as to whether, given the current state of the debt market, the underwriters will be able to proceed with the financing for the arena while the appeal is pending."

Real Rent Reform Campaign Launches

Tenant and housing groups met on January 26 to help plan the Real Rent Reform Campaign. The campaign seeks to: Ensure that all buildings leaving Mitchell-Lama or Section 8 go into rent stabilization regardless of when they were built and with no possibility of "unique or peculiar" rent increases.

- Eliminate vacancy decontrol.
- Eliminate high-rent decontrol. Gov. Spitzer's proposal to increase the threshold to \$2,800 a month is a step in the right direction, but it still means thousands of apartments will be decontrolled as they get more expensive.
- Change the name and functioning of the Rent Guidelines Board to make it more representative.
- Repeal the Urstadt Law and return home rule over rent and eviction policies to New York City.



JOE CATRON

Met Council executive director Jenny Laurie with Andres Mares Muro of Tenants and Neighbors, left, and Michael McKee of Tenants PAC.

Avella Introduces Anti-Warehousing Bill

By Sam J. Miller

While rents skyrocket and the homeless population grows, empty buildings and lots continue to fester throughout the five boroughs. Last year, a report issued by Picture the Homeless (*Tenant/Inquilino*, June '07) found that vacant buildings and lots in Manhattan alone could provide 24,000 potential apartments. That would be enough to house every homeless person citywide—6,000 homeless singles and 9,000 homeless families in city shelters, and at least 3,000 more homeless people on the streets, according to the city's own statistics.

Vacant property doesn't just affect homeless people. As Dr. Peter Marcuse says, "homelessness is the tip of the iceberg... and the iceberg is the housing market." The freedom of landlords to keep buildings empty for speculative purposes is inextricably tied to their power to raise rents arbitrarily and push out low-income tenants.

Last month, Queens City Council member Tony Avella introduced antiwarehousing legislation—a

bill that would make it illegal for landlords to keep property off the market intentionally. It would also create a mechanism to fund rehabilitation of these properties into housing for homeless people. This legislation is based on Picture the Homeless's Homeless Housing & Jobs Platform, which was written by homeless folks to identify the legislative and policy changes that would need to happen in order for us to see housing for low-income folks developed out of abandoned buildings.

Our argument is that the human rights of homeless people and the entire communities affected by gentrification outweigh the rights of landlords to keep large amounts of housing off the market. Vacant buildings will either serve to stabilize communities—or accelerate displacement.

For information about how you can support this initiative, contact Picture the Homeless at (646) 314-6423 or sam@picturethehomeless.org.

CITYWIDE MEETING

Saturday, March 1

11:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Musicians Local 802
322 W. 48th St.

(bet. 8th and 9th Aves.)

ALBANY LOBBYING

Tuesday, March 4

Reserve your bus seat:
212-797-6238, ext. 204
active@metcouncil.net

California

continued from page 1

ones that at this point we can't even think about, they're so dangerous." He also notes that the measure would hamper efforts to encourage the development of new affordable housing, such as inclusionary-zoning laws.

Dean Preston, a tenant attorney and organizer, left San Francisco's Tenderloin Housing Clinic in September to launch Tenants Together, California's only statewide tenant organization. He helped organize a Save Rent Control Convention in San Francisco on January 19.

"Tenants showed up in large numbers to save rent control," he says. "The event space was filled to capacity. Tenants are resolved to take strong action to defeat this dangerous initiative."

A similar event is planned for Los Angeles, Gross says. "We're holding a meeting down here in February to brief other organizations on what's going on and tie them into the campaign."

Several tenant organizations have joined Eminent Domain Reform Now, a statewide campaign for Proposition 99, the Homeowner Protection Act. That initiative would curtail eminent-domain abuse while leaving public regulations like rent controls in place. This way, Gross says, "voters who are concerned with eminent domain will have a choice to vote for something that will truly protect them." The competing propositions are the only two qualified to appear on the June 3 ballot.

Proposition 98 also threatens environmental, labor, zoning, and other protections. Because of its massive scale, the campaign opposing it has grown into what Gross modestly calls "a coalition that is broader than your typical tenants' rights or affordable-housing campaign." The bill has drawn the ire of organizations as diverse as the California Alliance for Retired Americans, the California League of Conservation Voters, the Consumer Federation of California, the League of California

Homeowners, the State Building and Construction Trades Council, and even the California State Association of Counties and the League of California Cities—all of which also support Proposition 99. With so many constituents united in a common cause, the effort to defeat Proposition 98 has breathed new life into California's tenant movement. "Rallies have been held in San Francisco and Los Angeles, and there will be more in these cities and elsewhere around the state," Preston says. "Tenants and tenant advocates are an integral part of the grass-roots campaign to defeat this ballot initiative."

But landlords have deep pockets, and California tenants face a difficult fight with far-reaching consequences. "Undoubtedly, landlords throughout the nation are watching this initiative closely," Preston says. "If [Proposition 98] passes, landlords in other states will view it as a green light to run similar measures. It is crucial that this measure be defeated, both to protect California's tenants and to prevent similar measures from hurting tenants across the country."

Gross agrees. "I think this is a threat to tenants and rent-control laws throughout the country," he says. "If the landlords succeed here, that will empower them to go after tenants everywhere."

Besides, Gross adds, California and New York tenant movements have always shared close ties. "When we originally fought for rent control in the mid-1970s," the former New Yorker says, "one of the landlords' arguments was that all of the tenant leaders fighting for rent control were from New York. And you know what? They were right!"



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www.citylimits.org

Elections

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number of small contributions to my campaign, Connecticut in its Clean Elections legislation accepts only contributions up to \$100. I would then be eligible to receive a public grant for the primary, and if I win that, for the general election. I could then spend the rest of my time talking to voters in my district about the issues that matter to them. Most important, I would be accountable

only to the voters in my district. The current system of campaign financing gives special interests undue influence on public policy. It has prevented important legislation from being passed and blocked real solutions to the harsh problems facing New Yorkers. We know that affordable housing in New York City is disappearing. We know that the developers and real-estate interests contributed over \$9 million to statewide and legislative candidates in 2006. And

we think that full public funding of campaigns in New York State would be a major step toward solving our affordable-housing crisis.

What can you do to help? Citizen Action of New York is working with members of the Legislature to level the playing field for all New Yorkers. We are encouraging them to write and pass legislation this year that will put a full public campaign-funding option in place.

With full public campaign funding and the armies of grass-roots tenant advocates working to elect

pro-tenant candidates, New York City could once again be a mecca for the working families, seniors, and young people who are now being displaced.

Pamela Bennett is director of Citizen Action of New York City, (212) 523-0180; www.citizenactionny.org. To get involved, contact kguild@citizenactionny.org. Call your legislator and tell them that you support Clean Elections—full public campaign funding.

2009 Candidates Grab Landlord Moolah

Though the 2009 mayoral election is almost two years away, the city's biggest landlords and developers have already poured boatloads of dollars into the campaign. As of Jan. 15, according to the *New York Times*, the top 10 real-estate firms in the city had already given \$820,000 to potential candidates, almost as much as they contributed in the entire 2001 campaign.

Rudin Management has already kicked in \$199,600, more than twice its 2001 total. The Related Companies have given \$143,200, and Newmark Knight Frank \$101,700. The top recipient was Queens Councilmember Melinda Katz, chair of the Council's Land Use Committee, who is running for comptroller and has taken almost \$200,000 from 25 top

real-estate firms. Among mayoral hopefuls, Council Speaker Christine Quinn has edged out Rep. Anthony Weiner and Comptroller William C. Thompson.

Many of the landlords were rushing to get their money down before Feb. 2, when a city law that reduced the maximum legal contribution from \$4,950 to \$400 went into effect.

Complaint Numbers

To reach the Department of Housing, Preservation and Development's Central Complaints hotline, call 311.

Also call 311 to reach the Department of Buildings and other city agencies.

Have a question about your rights?

Our phones are open to the public Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays from 1:30 to 5 p.m.

We can briefly answer your questions, help you with organizing or refer you to other help.

212-979-0611

Senior and Disabled Tenants

Seniors, 62 or older, in rent-regulated, Mitchell-Lama and some other housing programs whose disposable annual household income is \$27,000 or less (for the previous year) and who pay (or face a rent increase that would cause them to pay) one-third or more of that income in rent may be eligible for a Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE). Apply to:

The NYC Dept of the Aging
SCRIE Unit
2 Lafayette Street, NY, NY 10007.

Disabled tenants receiving eligible disability-related financial assistance with incomes of \$17,580 or less for individuals and \$25,212 or less for a couple facing rents equal to or more than one-third of their income may be eligible for the Disability Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE). Apply to:

NYC Dept. of Finance
DRIE Exemptions
59 Maiden Lane - 20th floor
New York, NY 10038

DRIE and SCRIE info is available on the city's website, www.nyc.gov, or call 311.

Fight Phony Demolitions! Come to Court Friday, Feb. 15

Two key cases where tenants are challenging the state DHCR's approval of landlords' phony demolition plans are now in court. Oral arguments are scheduled for Friday, February 15, at 9:30 a.m. at the Appellate Division, First Department, 27 Madison Ave. at 25th Street.

Tenants at 131-135 Duane St. in Tribeca are fighting their landlord's plan to evict them so it can convert the building's upper floors to luxury units. The Pataki DHCR approved this plan as a demolition, even though it would leave the building's landmarked facade and a restaurant on the ground floor intact.

And at 244 West 21st St., landlord Larry Tauber wants to evict the building's sole remaining tenant, Dan Peckham. Last June, a state Supreme Court judge said the DHCR hadn't properly defined what constitutes a demolition.

In both cases, the landlords are arguing that there's no reason for the DHCR to reconsider its approval. Come to court on February 15 and support the tenants!

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

LOWER EAST SIDE BRANCH at Cooper Square Committee
61 E. 4th St. (btwn. 2nd Ave. & Bowery)
Tuesdays 6:30 pm

LOWER MANHATTAN LOFT TENANTS
St. Margaret's House, Pearl & Fulton Sts.,
212-539-3538
Wednesdays 6 pm-7 pm

CHELSEA COALITION ON HOUSING
Covers 14th St. to 30th St., 5th Ave. to the Hudson River.
322 W. 17th St. (basement), CH3-0544
Thursdays 7:30 pm

MIRABEL SISTERS
618 W. 142nd St., 212-234-3002
Saturdays 1 - 4 pm

GOLES (Good Old Lower East Side)
171 Avenue B (between 10 and 11 St.);
and by appointments only except for emergencies. 212-533-2541.

VILLAGE INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATS
26 Perry St. (basement), 212-741-2994
Wednesdays 6 pm

HOUSING COMMITTEE OF RENA
Covers 135th St. to 165th St. from Riverside Dr. to St. Nicholas Ave.,
537 W. 156th St.
Thursdays 8 pm

WEST SIDE TENANTS UNION
4 W. 76 St.; 212-595-1274
Tuesday & Wednesday 6-7 pm

HOUSING CONSERVATION COORDINATORS
777 10 Ave.; 212-541-5996
Mondays 7-9 pm

Join Met Council

Membership: Individual, \$25 per year; Low-income, \$15 per year; family (voluntary: 2 sharing an apartment), \$30 per year. Supporting, \$40 per year. Sustaining, min. of \$100 per year (indicate amount of pledge). For affiliation of community or tenant organizations, large buildings, trade unions, etc. call 212-979-6238.

My apartment controlled stabilized unregulated other _____
 I am interested in volunteering my time to Met Council. Please call me to schedule times and duties. I can counsel tenants, do office work, lobby public officials, attend rallies/protests.

Name _____

Address _____ Apt. No. _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone Number _____ Email _____

Send your check or money order with this form to:
Metropolitan Council on Housing, 339 Lafayette St., NY, NY 10012