



Tenant Inquilino

Housing for people, not profit

Vol 30, No. 1
January 2000

Metropolitan Council on Housing
64 Fulton Street
New York, NY 10038

PERIODICAL

COUNCIL MOVES TO RENEW RENT PROTECTIONS Speaker Introduces Strong Renewal Bill; DiBrienza Proposes Bill to Tackle Housing Crisis

by Kenny Schaeffer

New York City's 1,000,000 rent-regulated families received two pieces of welcome news over the holiday season. City Council Speaker Peter Vallone introduced legislation to renew the city's rent-control and rent-stabilization laws, which expire on March 31; and Councilmember Steve DiBrienza proposed a "companion bill" intended to address some of the deeper causes of New York's acute housing affordability crisis.

The Vallone bill not only renews the rent and eviction laws with no weakening amendments, but also contains a provision to deter landlords from deregulating apartments illegally. Landlords currently deregulate vacant apartments completely when the rent reaches \$2,000 a month, charge whatever rents they want, and be able to evict the new tenant without cause when the lease expires. The Vallone bill would require owners to give tenants in newly deregulated apartments notification of how the rent legally reached the \$2,000 level.

Owners frequently deregulate apartments illegally, either by claiming inflated renovations to bring the rent up to \$2,000 or by simply charging \$2,000 or more outright. While not completely preventing this abuse, the Vallone bill offers a strong disincentive, as giving the new tenant the basis for the owner's claim will allow them to make an intelligent decision about whether to challenge the rent.

Predictably, the Vallone bill was met with howls of protest from the real-estate industry, with absurd claims that the reporting provision punishes owners and encourages spurious challenges by tenants. As philosopher and social activist Bertrand Russell observed about a real-estate tax reform in 1910, "the excellence of this proposal is to be measured by the hostility it arouses in landlords." By this standard, the Vallone bill will be an effective safeguard against one of the many leaks that have sprung in



STEVE WISHNIA

the rent-regulatory system in recent years as a result of relentless industry lobbying and campaign contributions.

While Met Council wel-

comed Speaker Vallone's commitment on this issue, tenants are still feeling outrage and betrayal fol-

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Protests, Lawsuits Stall Giuliani's Homeless Crackdown

by Steven Wishnia

For years, an elderly black woman panhandled on the corner of Second Avenue and East 11th Street, sitting by the wrought-iron

fence surrounding St. Mark's Church, thanking passers-by whether or not they dropped quarters into her paper coffee cup.

On the night before Thanksgiving, a young policewoman escorted her away from her spot.

"I guess it's illegal to be homeless now," an observer commented.

"I guess it is," she replied.

She hasn't been back since.

The Thanksgiving street sweeps represented the most visible part of the Giuliani administration's latest crackdown on the homeless. More far-reaching are its efforts to deny shelter to people who violate public-assistance regulations. Its new rules were supposed to go into effect Jan. 1, but have been held up by three separate lawsuits. Hearings on the lawsuits were held early this month, and decisions are expected soon.

The Giuliani administration issued its new regulations last October, requiring all shelter residents to do workfare, kicking out residents who don't, and putting children of families who got thrown out into foster care. Streets are not "bed-

rooms," the Mayor declared, and his policies were actually an act of "love" for the homeless, teaching them "personal responsibility."

"Personal responsibility" was the mantra of all Giuliani's rhetoric. If poor people don't have the *personal responsibility* to follow every single welfare regulation, then they

don't have enough *personal responsibility* to deserve shelter. And if they don't have enough *personal responsibility* to ensure that they have shelter, then they don't have enough *personal responsibility* to be allowed to keep their children.

"The work requirement

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EDITORIAL

LEAVE NOW, RUDY!

As the new millennium began, NY-1 broadcast live from the Mayor's command bunker in the World Trade Center. Sometimes it was impossible to tell whether it was a disaster center or his campaign headquarters, but for New York voters that amounts to the same thing.

Rudolph Giuliani has done the impossible by making us long for the good old days of Ed Koch and David Dinkins.

Much as we would like to see Mark Green become mayor a year early, we cannot bring ourselves to hope that Giuliani is elected to the US Senate next November just to hasten his inevitable departure. So long as his fellow Republicans are in the majority in Congress, the prospect of his continuing to impose his right-wing views, this time on the entire country, is dismal.

However, there might be a way to have our cake and eat it too. Last November, Mayor Giuliani declared that the charter-revision vote was a referendum on his mayoralty. Since it was emphatically rejected by a 3-1 margin, shouldn't he step down?

There is a growing consensus that the mayor has overstayed his welcome, and that the reduction in crime was triggered by Dinkins' "safe cities, safe streets" program and does not justify Giuliani's assault on civil liberties and civic democracy, his vindictive social policies and vicious political style.

In mid-December, John Cardinal O'Connor, whose courageous struggle against a brain tumor has left him with few words, joined a sickened city in urging Giuliani to rescind his plans to take children away from homeless mothers and to arrest homeless men, yet the mayor persisted until temporarily enjoined by a two-judge panel in state Supreme Court. The Rev. Al Sharpton has pointed out that if Giuliani had been mayor of Bethlehem, Joseph and Mary would have been jailed and Jesus put in a foster care. And outspoken Father Bob Castle of St. Mary's Church on West 126th Street offered his professional opinion that Rudolph Giuliani will go to hell.

That's a long journey. Why doesn't he start now?

L.E.S. Greengrocer Workers Win Union Contract, But the Struggle Continues...

For years, the majority of city greengrocer workers have been forced to work long hours with no sick time, vacation or overtime compensation. Employers have routinely violated federal and state labor laws including minimum-wage requirements.

In the past year, UNITE local 169 has organized workers at several Lower East Side greengrocers. After workers who signed union cards were fired at 4 locations, a picket and community boycott ensued. Under intense community pressure and a positive ruling by the National Labor Relations Board, the employers at these four locations have agreed to accept the union contract and follow the law.

This is a tremendous victory!! However, there are many workers at other greengrocers who continue to endure harassment and illegal sanctions. U.N.I.T.E. and the L.E.S. Community Labor Coalition have called for a picket and boycott of "Fruit and Vegetables" located at 118 1st Ave (near 7th St.). People are need to walk the picket Mon.-Fri. from 12-8pm and on Saturdays from 8am-4pm. Pickets of other greengrocers are expected to follow shortly. Met Council urges its members to support this important campaign.

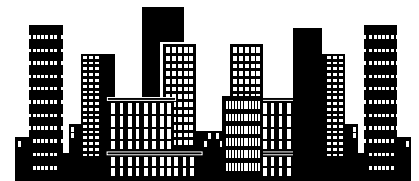
For more info contact UNITE, at (212) 255-9655 and ask for Solis or Jeff.

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- Weekly Housing Court Decision summaries



is published monthly except August by Metropolitan Council on Housing (Met Council, Inc.), 64 Fulton Street, NY, NY 10038 (212) 693-0550; metcouncil@aol.com

Tenant/Inquilino is distributed to members and to affiliated organizations of Met Council as part of their membership. Subscriptions are \$2.50 per year for members, \$5 for institutions per year.

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Articles, letters, artwork and photographs are welcome. Text furnished on Microsoft Word for Macintosh is preferred. 3.5" MACINTOSH OR IBM FORMATTED DISKETTES ARE PREFERRED.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY Postmaster: Send address changes to: TENANT/INQUILINO 64 Fulton St., Room 401 New York, NY 10038

Metropolitan Council on Housing, founded in 1958, is incorporated as Met Council, Inc., a membership organization dedicated to decent, affordable, integrated housing.

EL INQUILINO HISPANO

Concejo decide renovar protecciones de alquileres

El Vocero presenta proyecto de ley de renovación; DiBrienza propone proyecto para enfrentar a la crisis de viviendas

Por Kenny Schaeffer
Traducido por Vajra Kilgour

El millón de familias de renta regulada de la ciudad de Nueva York recibieron dos buenas noticias durante la temporada de vacaciones. El Vocero del Concejo Municipal Peter Vallone presentó un proyecto para renovar las leyes de control y estabilización de renta de la ciudad, que se vencen el 31 de marzo. Además, el

concejal Steve DiBrienza propuso un "proyecto acompañante" con el propósito de enfrentar las causas más profundas de la grave crisis de vivienda asequible en Nueva York.

El proyecto de Vallone no solamente renueva las leyes de renta y desalojo sin enmiendas debilitantes, sino también abarca una estipulación para impedir

que los caseros remuevan apartamentos del sistema de regulación ilegalmente. Actualmente, los caseros pueden remover apartamentos de las regulaciones completamente cuando el alquiler llega a \$2,000 al mes, cobrar lo que quieran, y poder desalojar al nuevo inquilino sin justificación cuando el contrato se vence. El proyecto de Vallone

exigiría que los dueños de edificios les den notificación de cómo el alquiler llegó al nivel de \$2,000 a los inquilinos en apartamentos nuevamente descontrolados.

Los dueños descontrolan los apartamentos ilegalmente muy a menudo, ya sea por reclamar gastos inflados de renovaciones para que el

alquiler suba a \$2,000 o simplemente por cobrar \$2,000 o más sin justificación. Aunque no pone fin por completo a este abuso, el proyecto de Vallone propone un fuerte desincentivo, ya que al dar al nuevo inquilino la base del reclamo del dueño le deja hacer una decisión inteli-

pasa a la página 4

Los Ajustes de la "Junta de Regulación de Renta" de la Ciudad de Nueva York (Orden No. 31)

Para los contratos de apartamentos de Renta Estabilizada que comienzan el 1ro. de octubre de 1999 hasta el 30 de septiembre de 2000, incluyendo las concesiones de Pataki adoptadas por la Legislatura Estatal el 19 de junio de 1997

Los topes de renta que aparecen en el cuadro son los incrementos máximos que los dueños de edificios pueden cobrar legalmente por los apartamentos de renta estabilizada en la ciudad de Nueva York. Son válidos para todos los contratos que comienzan dentro del período de doce meses a partir del 1ro. de octubre de 1999. Los incrementos de alquiler basados en las pautas para la renovación del contrato de 1 o 2 años pueden cobrarse solamente una vez durante el período cubierto por dichas pautas, y deben ser aplicados a la renta legal estabilizada para el 30 de septiembre de 1999. Las cantidades que aparecen en el cuadro y los incrementos para los apartamentos vacíos no se aplican a los apartamentos que estaban sujetos a renta controlada en aquella fecha.

Los Contratos para Apartamentos Vacíos o Nuevos En junio de 1997, el gobernador George Pataki, al intentar destruir la regulación de rentas, forzó cambios que les dieron a los caseros una sobrepaga muy grande por los apartamentos vacíos. Una cláusula de la "Reforma al Acta de Regulación de Renta" de 1997 permite que los nuevos alquileres sean incrementados en un porcentaje obligatorio: 20% para un contrato de dos años, y por un contrato de 1 año, 20% de incremento menos la diferencia en el tope de renovación para los contratos de 1 y 2 años. La nueva ley permite también incrementos adicionales para los apartamentos vacíos donde no se habían cobrado incrementos por desocupación por ocho años o más.

Sobrecargos de Renta Los inquilinos deben estar al tanto de que muchos caseros van a aprovecharse de la complejidad de estas regulaciones y sobrepagas, así como del poco conocimiento de los inquilinos del historial de renta de sus apartamentos, para cobrar un alquiler ilegal. Una vez que el

inquilino haya tomado posesión del apartamento, puede escoger entre llenar un formulario de queja de sobrecargo de renta con la oficina de la División de Vivienda y Renovación Comunal (DHCR), o disputar la cantidad de la renta en la corte de vivienda de la ciudad para que se determine cuál es el alquiler legal.

Si un posible inquilino da muestras de conocer sus derechos, lo más probable es que el casero no firmará ningún contrato con tal inquilino. Los caseros evitan contratar con inquilinos que les pueden dar problemas. El sobrecargo de alquiler es muy común. Todos los inquilinos deben luchar contra posibles sobrecargos. Obtenga y llene un formulario *Form RA-89* con la oficina de DHCR para determinar el alquiler correcto en los archivos oficiales. Llame a la DHCR a (718) 739-6400 para obtener un formulario.

La Apelación de la Renta de Mercado Justa Otro tipo de sobrecargo ocurre frecuentemente cuando se vacía un apartamento que previamente estaba sujeto a renta controlada y se alquila con renta estabilizada. La Junta de Regulación de Renta (RGB) esta-

blece anualmente lo que ellos llaman el "Tope Especial de la Renta de Mercado Justa," el cual es empleado por la DHCR para bajar las rentas de mercado injustas de los inquilinos que llenan el formulario llamado "Apelación a la Renta Justa de Mercado" (FMRA). Según la Orden 31, es la Renta de Mercado Justa de HUD o un 150% sobre la renta base máxima. Ningún inquilino de un apartamento de renta estabilizada que fue descontrolado el 1ro de abril de 1984 o después debe dejar de poner a prueba la llamada "Renta Legal Inicial Regulada" (renta de mercado) que los caseros cobran cuando hay descontrol del apartamento. Use el formulario de DHCR *Form RA-89*. Indique claramente que su queja es tanto una queja de "Apelación a la Renta Justa de Mercado" como de "sobrecargo." La corte de vivienda no puede tomar decisión sobre una Apelación de Renta de Mercado. Apartamentos vacíos que antes estaban controlados en edificios que se han convertido en cooperativas o condominios no se vuelven estabilizados y no satisfacen los requisitos para la Apelación de la Renta Justa de Mercado.

Exención de Incrementos para las Personas de Mayor Edad: Las personas de 62 años o más que viven en apartamentos estabilizados y cuyos ingresos familiares anuales son de \$20,000 o menos, y que pagan (o enfrentan un incremento de alquiler que los forzaría a pagar) una renta de un tercio o más de sus ingresos, pueden tener derecho al programa de Exención de Incrementos para las Personas de Mayor Edad (SCRIE, por sus siglas en inglés), si aplican al Departamento de la Ciudad de Nueva York Sobre las Personas de Mayor Edad, cuya dirección es: SCRIE Unit, 2 Lafayette Street, NY, NY 10007. Si el alquiler actual de un inquilino que tiene derecho a este programa sobrepasa un tercio del ingreso, no se lo puede reducir, pero es posible evitar incrementos de alquiler en el futuro. Obtenga el formulario de SCRIE por llamar al (212) 442-1000.

Unidades de Desván (Lofts) Los incrementos legales sobre la renta base para las unidades de desván son de un 1 por ciento por un contrato de un año y un 2 por ciento por un contrato de dos años. No se permiten incre-

mentos para las unidades de desván vacías.

Hoteles y Apartamentos de una Sola Habitación Lo establecido es un 4% para los apartamentos de hotel de Clase A, casas de habitaciones, hoteles de clase B (de 30 habitaciones o más), hoteles de una sola habitación, y las casas de habitaciones (Clase B, 6-29 cuartos), sobre la renta legal que se pagaba el 30 de septiembre de 1999. No se permiten incrementos para apartamentos vacíos. Lo incremento estipulado no se puede cobrar a menos que un 70 por ciento de las unidades en el edificio sean ocupadas por inquilinos permanentes de renta estabilizada o controlada, pagando rentas reguladas legales. Además, no se permiten incrementos si el casero ha omitido de darle al nuevo ocupante una copia de los Derechos y Responsabilidades de los Dueños e Inquilinos de Hoteles.

La Desregulación de Rentas Altas y Altos Ingresos (1) Los apartamentos que legalmente se alquilan por \$2,000 o más por mes y que se desocuparon entre el 7 de julio de 1993 y el 1ro. de octubre de 1993, o en o desde del 1ro de abril de 1994 son sujetos a la desregulación. (2) La misma desregulación se les aplica, para el mismo período establecido en (1), a los apartamentos que legalmente pagan \$2,000 o más mensualmente aunque no se desocupen, si el ingreso total de la familia es más de \$175,000 en los dos años consecutivos previos. Para cumplir los requisitos de esta segunda forma de desregulación, el casero tiene que enviarle un formulario de certificación de ingreso al inquilino entre el 1ro de enero y el 1ro de mayo, así como someter dicho formulario al DHCR y conseguir su aprobación.

Tipo de Contrato	Renta Legal Actual	Contrato de 1 Año	Contrato de 2 Años	
Renovación del Contrato	Más de \$500	2%	4%	
	\$500 o menos (Alquileres de \$215 o menos se alzan a \$215 después de aplicarse los aumentos)	2% + \$15	4% + \$15	
Contratos para Apartamentos Vacíos	Más de \$500	Incrementos por desocupación cobrados en los últimos 8 años	18%	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 18%	0.6% por el número de años desde el último incremento por estar vacío, más el 20%
	Less than \$300	Incrementos por desocupación cobrados en los últimos 8 años	18% + \$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, + 18% + \$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	18% 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 18%, 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



ley de renovación

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gente en torno a recusar o no el alquiler.

Previsiblemente, el proyecto de Vallone encontró abucheos en la industria de bienes raíces, con alegaciones absurdas que la estipulación de notificar castiga a los caseros y hace más fáciles las recusaciones falsas por parte de los inquilinos. Como dijo en 1910 el filósofo y activista social Bertrand Russell sobre reformas de impuestos de bienes raíces, “la excelencia de esta propuesta se mide por la hostilidad que suscita en los caseros.” Por este estándar, el proyecto de Vallone será una defensa eficaz contra una de las muchas fallas que se han hecho en el sistema de regulación de renta en los últimos años como resultado del cabildeo incesante y contribuciones de campaña por parte de la industria.

Aunque el Consejo Metropolitano de Vivienda (Met Council) celebró el compromiso de Vallone en este asunto, los inquilinos todavía se sienten ofendidos y traicionados después del proyecto encabezado por Vallone para destruir las leyes destinadas a proteger a los niños del envenenamiento por plomo—algo que había prometido específicamente que no iba a hacer mientras buscaba el apoyo de inquilinos durante su postulación para ser gobernador del estado en 1998. La industria de bienes raíces de Nueva York ha tenido acceso especial a Vallone durante muchos años, y es seguro que los dueños le van a pedir favores adicionales mientras él solicita sus contribuciones para su postulación para alcalde que se prevé en 2001, cuando los límites de términos le prohíbe continuar en el Concejo Municipal.

“Por esta razón, proponemos continuar exponiendo al Concejo a la luz pública hasta que se apruebe el proyecto de Vallone y se seque la tinta,” dijo Jenny Laurie, directora de Met Council.

El concejal Steve DiBrienza (D-Brooklyn) le siguió los pasos a Vallone al revelar sus planes de presentar, junto con unos colegas, un “proyecto acompañante” para prohibir la imposición por la Junta de Renta Regulada del “impuesto de pobres”—un sobrecargo anual de \$15-\$25 pagado solo por inquilinos de apartamentos que se alquilan por menos de \$500 al mes, que suelen ser los más pobres de la ciudad. El proyecto de DiBrienza también limitará los aumentos anuales de hasta un 7.5 por ciento actualmente pagados por los inquilinos de renta controlada, para ponerlos de acuerdo con los bajos aumentos pagados por los inquilinos de renta estabilizada, típicamente un 2 por ciento por un contrato de renovación de un año.

Estos dos proyectos, además de la renovación de las leyes de control y estabilización de rentas sin debilitarlas más, son parte del programa legislativo de cinco puntos de DiBrienza para enfrentar la crisis de vivienda asequible.

El cuarto punto es revocar la “Ley

Urstadt,” vestigio de las medidas fracasadas de descontrol del gobernador Nelson Rockefeller de 1971. Esta ley prohíbe que la ciudad de Nueva York promulgue controles de renta más rigurosos que los aprobados por la legislatura estatal. Aunque el Concejo no puede revocar la Ley Urstadt, el concejal Stanley Michels—demócrata de Manhattan que ha sido la voz más fuerte de los inquilinos en el Comité de Vivienda y Edificios durante muchos años—ha presentado una resolución que exige que la legislatura lo haga.

El quinto punto es revocar tres de los más recientes asaltos de la legislatura estatal contra las regulaciones de renta: el descontrol de apartamentos vacíos de \$2,000; el descontrol de apartamentos ocupados por familias de altos ingresos; y el aumento de un 20 por ciento permitido cada vez que un inquilino se muda, que se burla de la “estabilización” por inflar los alquileres marcadamente y que les da a los caseros un incentivo enorme para desalojar a los inquilinos actuales. El Concejo no puede revocar estas provisiones de ley estatal, pero sí puede aprobar una resolución instando a la legislatura que actúe.

“De vecindario a vecindario a través de toda la ciudad, las familias trabajadoras y de ingresos medianos se hallan fuera del mercado de vivienda—los jóvenes, los viejos, los pobres, la clase media, todo el mundo,” explica DiBrienza. Necesitamos conservar y ampliar el suministro de vivienda asequible, y hay muchos factores, desde mantener los niveles de alquiler al alcance de los inquilinos hasta asegurar una ejecución adecuada de los códigos de manutención de vivienda y la creación de nuevas viviendas.

“Además del programa legislativo de cinco puntos, necesitamos mejores programas de ejecución de códigos de viviendas y subvención de renta, identificación temprana de edificios en aprietos y su transferencia a gerencias responsables con la participación de los inquilinos, un manejo adecuado de los edificios propiedades de la ciudad, y la creación de nuevas viviendas asequibles.”

Se espera que DiBrienza, presidente del Comité del Bienestar Público del Concejo, se postule para el puesto del Defensor Público Mark Green cuando éste dimite el año que viene. Él ha encabezado la resistencia exitosa del Concejo en contra de algunas de las iniciativas más desalmadas del alcalde Rudolph Giuliani sobre el *welfare*, como las amenazas de quitarles los hijos a las madres sin techo, mandar a la cárcel a los desamparados, y expulsar de la asistencia pública a la gente con SIDA si no cumplen requisitos de “revisión de verificación de elegibilidad” más allá de los ya establecidos por la Sección para Servicios de SIDA y Respaldo de Ingresos.

También ha atraído amplio apoyo para su propuesta innovadora de crear miles de trabajos perma-

nentes del gobierno y de la comunidad para la gente en programas de asistencia pública, con salarios y beneficios decentes, en lugar de los trabajos de “callejón sin salida” de *workfare* impuestos por Giuliani y su comisario de *welfare* Jason Turner.

“Los proyectos de Vallone y DiBrienza les dan a los inquilinos en este año algo por lo cual pueden luchar aquí en Nueva York, sin tener que ir a Albany,” señala Jenny Laurie. “Renovar las leyes de control y estabilización de renta sin que se debiliten más, y cerrar la puerta a la regulación fraudulenta de \$2,000 forzando a los dueños a exponer las bases para esa renta, será una gran victoria, si Vallone cumple su palabra. Pero

aunque trata algunos de los síntomas, no hace lo suficiente para enfrentar las causas de la cada vez peor crisis de vivienda. El proyecto de DiBrienza, junto con las resoluciones para restituir autonomía local al revocar la Ley Urstadt, y abrogar las peores invasiones del estado en las regulaciones de renta, va mucho más allá, y forma parte de un programa global para atacar al problema por varios lados a la vez.”

Se sugiere que los inquilinos se mantengan atentos hasta que el Concejo vote en marzo. Para informarse sobre cómo participar en o contribuir a la campaña de Met Council para que estas leyes se aprueben, llame a (212) 693-0553.



E-mail Met Council
metcouncil@aol.com

No Se Congele: ¡ORGANIZASE!



La ley requiere que su casero provea calefacción y agua caliente a los niveles 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 dentro 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 dentro debe ser al menos de 55 grados en todo el apartamento.

Agua caliente a un mínimo de 120 grados debe proveerse las 24 horas del día, todo el año.

Si su casero no mantiene esas temperaturas mínimas, usted debería:

- * Llamar al Buro Central de Quejas (Central Control Bureau) de la ciudad de Nueva York al (212)960-4800 inmediatamente, con el propósito de documentar la violación del casero. Llame repetidamente. Un inspector debería de venir eventualmente, aunque a veces no lo hacen.

- * Haga que otros inquilinos en el edificio llamen a Central Complaint. Todos deben llamar repetidamente, al menos una vez al día, y todos los días en que no se enmiende la situación.

- * Consiga un buen termómetro para fuera y adentro, y mantenga una documentación de las fechas exactas, las horas, las temperaturas, tanto afuera como adentro, mientras no se enmiende la situación. Esta documentación es su evidencia

- * Llame a la División de Vivienda y Renovación Comunal del Estado de Nueva York (DHCR, por sus siglas en inglés) al (718) 739-6400, y requiera que le envíen el formulario de queja de calefacción y agua caliente. Llene el formulario con cuanto apartamentos en su edificio puedan firmarlo, demandando una orden para restaurar la calefacción y el agua caliente, y una reducción y

congelamiento (perdón por la expresión!) en todas las rentas.

- * Es importante llamar al Central Complaints y documentar oficialmente la violación del casero, pero no confíe sólo en que la ciudad va a corregir la situación.

- * Ustedes van a necesitar una asociación de inquilinos fuerte para obligar al casero a proveer la calefacción y el agua caliente. Escriban al casero para demandar las reparaciones y aceite. Preparense para ir a huelga de renta; si es necesario, en forma rápida.

La ley sobre la calefacción establece también:

- * Que el Departamento de Reparaciones de Emergencia de la ciudad le provea la calefacción si el casero no lo hace.

- * Una multa de \$250 al casero por cada día que se produzca la violación. (Sin embargo, la Corte de Vivienda raras veces impone estas multas, por no hablar de que no las colecta).

- * Una multa de \$1,000 al casero Si algún aparato de control automático se instala en la “boila” para mantener la temperatura por debajo del mínimo legal.

- * Si el tanque de combustible de la “boila” está vacío, los inquilinos tienen el derecho de comprar su propio combustible después de haber pasado 24 horas sin calefacción, y sin obtener respuesta del casero. Esto no se aplica si la “boila” esta rota y necesita tanto reparación como combustible.

Cuidado! proteja su dinero! Si ustedes deciden comprar el combustible, deben seguir los procedimientos legales cuidadosamente. Deben re-querir la ayuda y el consejo de un organizador de inquilinos.

El hecho de que las leyes de calefacción y agua caliente están en los libros no significa que el gobierno la implementa. No se congele esperando por la ciudad o el estado para actuar. Organízase!

DHCR Proposes 4.3% MBR Factor

by Jenny Laurie

On January 5, the state Division of Housing and Community Renewal held a hearing on the proposed MBR factor of 4.3% for 2000/01. While tenant advocates and elected officials who testified were relieved that the factor was that low, rent-controlled tenants argued for a freeze on rents. Most of the city's remaining rent-controlled tenants are elderly people living on fixed incomes.

"Rent-controlled tenants, being retired, deserve a time of respite and tranquility," testified Tom Siracuse, a tenant leader from the West Side, after describing the constant hassles that tenants had to go through every time they wanted even a simple repair. "With landlords costs increasing less than 1% in the last year, 4.3% is too high."

"I don't think they deserve any increases," agreed Belle Feldman, tenant leader from London Terrace Gardens, a 10-building complex in Chelsea, "not when you see what they are getting from conversions in our building to high-rent, deregulated apartments, or commercial units."

For the third time, the

DHCR has proposed a Maximum Base Rent factor that is relatively low and is in keeping with the City Council law that altered the 1996/97 MBR factor and required the agency to change the formula used to set it. Landlords have sued over the change, and the DHCR warns tenants that the lower MBR increases are not necessarily permanent.

The city once had over a million rent-controlled apartments, but there are now only about 50,000 to 60,000 left. These apartments were placed under vacancy decontrol in 1971, so they became rent-stabilized or completely deregulated when the current tenants leave. Only tenants (or their successors) who have lived continuously since 1971 in buildings built before 1947 are covered by rent control.

Rent increases for these apartments are only allowed when the landlord applies to the DHCR through the laborious and arcane Maximum Base Rent System. Instituted in 1970 by the City Council when almost all apartments were rent-controlled, the MBR system allotted each apartment a

"base rent" (actually a ceiling rent) according to the landlord's expenses, the income from any commercial units, and an 8.5% return on capital value. Tenants pay something called the Maximum Collectible Rent, which goes up by 7.5% every year until the ceiling rent is reached.

Once the MBR ceiling rent is reached, the rent paid by the tenant only goes up when the MBR rent goes up. The MBR is raised once every two years by a factor determined by the DHCR using a mandated formula. The Jan. 5 hearing was the agency's way of gathering public comment on the proposal for a 4.3% factor for 2000-01.

While most tenants paid a 7.5% increase every year when the MBR system began, today, according to information given at the hearing, almost all rent-controlled apartments are at their maximum base rents. This means that with low MBR factors, tenants pay only the factor over the two years as a rent increase, amounts that are much more in keeping with increases in landlords' costs.

The factors are lower now than they were before

1996 because the old formula regularly produced double-digit factors. The City Council changed the way the factor was calculated that year, after DHCR proposed a 1996-97 factor of over 30%. The new formula reduced it to 3%.

With most rent-controlled apartments at their maximum, the lower MBR factors are critical in keeping housing affordable. The 1996 Housing & Vacancy Survey showed that tenants in the city's 70,000 rent-controlled apartments had a median income of \$12,000 and a

median age of 70. The next survey due out, the 1999 HVS, will undoubtedly show far fewer rent-controlled apartments.

Having held its hearing, the DHCR will soon promulgate the factor and mail notices to the owners of about 12,000 buildings, letting them know what they can get in increases from their rent-controlled tenants for the next two years.



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:

- * Call the New York City Central Complaints Bureau at (212) 960-4800 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 a day, and 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. File it with as many apartments in your building signing on as possible, demanding an order restoring heat and hot water, and

a reduction and freeze (pardon the expression!) in all the rents.

It is important to call Central Complaints and officially record your landlord's violation, but don't rely on the city to do anything about the situation.

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 — fast, if necessary.

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 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!

Worker Killed in Building Collapse

The building at 26 Middleton St. in Williamsburg where the roof collapsed in November, killing a construction worker. At left is a memorial to him. The building's developer is a Giuliani contributor, and the administration may have pressured the Buildings Department to overlook violations.



STEVE WISHNIA

City Computer Glitches Leave Tenants in the Cold

By Kathleen McGowan

Better buy a coat. The city's Department of Housing Preservation and Development's brand-new computer system for tracking heat and hot-water complaints has gone on the fritz. With the computers malfunctioning, say tenant lawyers, it will be very difficult for tenants to make a case in Housing Court, or protect themselves against evictions when they withhold rent. Plus, the agency's own lawyers have been hobbled in some of their most important work—going after landlords who leave their renters in the cold.

The computer system has two big problems. Because of an HPD database upgrade, the computer terminals that judges and attorneys use to look up violation reports in court haven't communicated with HPD's central computers since Nov. 22. On-site liaisons can look up the records, if the judge requests it, but tenant attor-

neys will have to subpoena the records, which takes time and resources. And for tenants without lawyers it's simply not an option.

"We're very concerned," says April Newbauer, attorney in charge at the Queens civil division of Legal Aid. Without records, "the tenants will have no way of proving previous violations, or secure the right to a rent abatement. It's a huge problem." Harlem Legal Aid's Kenny Schaeffer points out that without proof, it's hard to get violations corrected.

Ernesto Belzaguy, first deputy chief clerk of Manhattan's civil court, says the new system would not be fully functional until some time in February. Until then, judges won't be able to access records from court. "Instead of having it at the bench, [judges] will have to call the [HPD] inspectors' office," he says. "It's not impossible, but it's a little less easy."

"HPD has addressed transitional issues with the Court to the Court's satisfaction," the agency responded in a statement to *City Limits*. "The reports are available to the judges on the same day in virtually all cases; there may be some isolated cases that take until the next day."

But there's a more serious problem: Internal database malfunctions have led HPD to call some of its attorneys off new heat-related cases. Each winter, shivering tenants call in roughly 150,000 complaints about a lack of heat or hot water. Tenants can go to court to get the problems fixed, or the agency's Housing Litigation Bureau can initiate more powerful legal cases against landlords. In winter, HPD's attorneys can file between 30 and 50 of these cases each week; Commissioner Richard Roberts recently testified there were about 1,800

last year.

But an internal agency memo reveals that the computer glitches will pull some of the department's Brooklyn attorneys off the job for part of January. "We have far less cases ready to be put on the court calendar than we should," reads the memo. Because records are unavailable, several attorneys have had some January court dates canceled, preventing them from filing new depart-

ment-initiated heat and hot-water cases on some of the coldest days of the year.

"It proves that Commissioner Roberts' promises before the City Council a few weeks ago were empty when he promised that the Housing Litigation Bureau would be more aggressive in enforcing the housing-maintenance code," says Schaeffer.

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METROPOLITAN COUNCIL ON HOUSING

Met Council is a citywide tenant union.

Our phones are open to the public Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 1:30 to 5:00 p.m.

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

212-693-0550

NYC Rent Guidelines Board Adjustments (Order No. 31)

for Rent Stabilized Leases commencing Oct. 1, 1999 through Sept. 30, 2000, including the Pataki vacancy bonuses adopted by the State Legislature on June 19, 1997

The above rent guidelines table shows the maximum increases landlords in New York City can legally charge for rent stabilized apartments on all leases commencing in the twelve-month period beginning October 1, 1999. Increases in rent based on the 1- or 2-year renewal guidelines can be charged only once during the period covered by the guidelines, and must be applied to the legal stabilized rent on September 30, 1999. The above guidelines and vacancy bonuses do not apply to an apartment which was rent controlled on that date.

Vacancy Leases

In June 1997, Governor George Pataki, as a part of his efforts to destroy rent regulation, forced changes that gave landlords large vacancy bonuses. Provisions of his Rent Regulation Reform Act of 1997 allow the rents of apartments to rise by a statutory percentage: 20 percent for a 2-year lease, and 20 percent minus the difference between the 1- and 2-year renewal guidelines for 1-year leases. The new law also allows additional vacancy increases for apartments which have had no vacancy allowance in eight or more years.

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. The tenant can choose between filing an overcharge complaint with the Division of Housing and Community Renewal or challenging the rent in Housing Court to get a determination of the legal rent.

Lease Type	Current Legal Rent	One-year Lease	Two-year Lease	
Renewal Leases	more than \$500	2%	4%	
	\$500 or less (Rents that are \$215 or less brought up to \$215 after increases applied)	2% plus \$15	4% plus \$15	
Vacancy Leases	More than \$500	Vacancy allowance charged within last 8 years	18%	20%
		No vacancy allowance charged within last 8 years	0.6% times number of years since last vacancy allowance, plus 18%	0.6% times number of years since last vacancy allowance, plus 20%
	Less than \$300	Vacancy allowance charged within last 8 years	18% plus \$100	20% plus \$100
		No vacancy allowance charged within last 8 years	0.6% times number of years since last vacancy allowance, plus 18% 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	18% 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 18%, or \$100, whichever is greater	0.6% times number of years since last vacancy allowance, plus 20%, or \$100, whichever is greater

A prospective tenant who expresses knowledge of their rights will probably not be given a lease to sign. Landlords avoid renting to tenants who may be troublesome. Overcharging is very common. Every tenant should challenge possible overcharge. With DHCR, obtain and fill out *Form RA-89* to determine the correct rent from official records. Call DHCR at (718) 739-6400 to obtain the form.

Fair Market Rent Appeal

Another type of overcharge frequently occurs at the time that a previously rent controlled apartment becomes vacant and is re-rented as a stabilized unit. The Rent Guidelines Board annually sets what they call the "Special Fair Market Rent Guideline" that is used by DHCR to lower unfair market rents for tenants who file the Fair Market Rent Appeal

(FMRA). Under Order 31, it is HUD Fair Market Rent or 150% above the maximum base rent. No stabilized tenant of an apartment that was decontrolled on or after April 1, 1984 should fail to challenge the so-called Initial Legal Regulated Rent (market rent) that landlords charge upon decontrol. Use DHCR *Form RA-89*. Indicate clearly that your complaint is both a complaint of "overcharge" and "Fair Market Rent Appeal." The Housing Court cannot determine a Fair Market Rent Appeal. Formerly controlled vacant apartments in buildings converted to co-ops or condos do not become stabilized and are not eligible for a Fair Market Rent Appeal.

Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption

Rent stabilized seniors, 62 years or older, whose disposable

annual household income is \$20,000 or less 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) if they apply to the NYC Dept of the Aging, SCRIE Unit at 2 Lafayette Street, NY, NY 10007. If an otherwise eligible tenant's current rent level is already above one-third of income, it cannot be rolled back, but future rent increases may be waived. Obtain the SCRIE application form by calling (212) 442-1000.

Loft Units

Legalized loft unit increases above the base rent are 1 percent for a one-year lease and 2 percent for two years. No vacancy allowance is permitted on vacant lofts.

Hotels and SROs

The guideline is 4 percent for Class A apartment hotels, lodging houses, Class B hotels (30 rooms or more), single room occupancy (SROs) hotels, and rooming houses (Class B, 6-29 rooms), above the legal rent paid on September 30, 1999. No vacancy allowance is permitted. The guideline is not collectible unless 70% or more of the units in the building are occupied by permanent rent stabilized or controlled tenants paying legal regulated rents. Further, no increase is allowed when the landlord has failed to provide the new occupant a copy of the Rights and Duties of Hotel Owners and Tenants.

High-rent, High-income Deregulation

(1) Apartments legally renting for \$2,000 or more a month that became vacant from July 7, 1993 through October 1, 1993, or on April 1, 1994 and thereafter are subject to deregulation. (2) The same deregulation applies in the time periods set forth in (1) above to apartments legally renting for \$2,000 or more a month without their becoming vacant if the total household income exceeds \$175,000 in each of the prior two consecutive years. To be eligible for this second form of deregulation, the landlord must send an income certification form to the tenant between January 1 and May 1 and file it with and get the approval of DHCR.



Rent Law Renewal

continued from page 1

lowing his spearheading legislation last June gutting the laws designed to protect children from lead-paint poisoning, which he specifically promised not to do while seeking tenant support for his 1998 gubernatorial race. The real-estate industry has had special access to Vallone for many years, and owners are sure to ask for additional favors as he solicits their contributions for his expected mayoral bid in 2001, when term limits bar him from continuing in the Council.

"For this reason, we intend to keep the spotlight on the Council until the Vallone bill is passed and the ink is dry," says Met Council director Jenny Laurie.

Councilmember Steve DiBrienza (D-Brooklyn) followed Vallone's announcement by revealing plans to introduce, together with a number of his colleagues, a "companion bill" which would bar the Rent Guidelines Board from imposing its "poor tax"—an annual surcharge of \$15-\$25 paid only by tenants in apartments renting below \$500 a month, who tend to be among the city's poorest. The DiBrienza bill would also limit the annual increases of up to 7-1/2% currently paid by rent-controlled tenants, bringing them into line with the lower increases paid by rent-stabilized tenants, typically 2% on a one-year lease renewal.

These two proposals, along with renewing the rent-control and rent-stabilization laws without any further weakening, are part of DiBrienza's five-point legislative program to address the housing-affordability crisis.

The fourth point is to repeal the "Urstadt Law," a relic of Gov. Nelson Rockefeller's disastrous 1971 decontrol measures, which prohibits New York City from enacting any rent controls stricter than those approved by the state. While the Council cannot repeal the Urstadt law, Councilmember Stanley Michels—a Manhattan Democrat who has been tenants' strongest voice on the Housing & Buildings Committee for many years—has introduced a resolution demanding that the Legislature do so.

The fifth point is repealing three of the state legislature's most recent assaults on rent regula-

decontrol; decontrol of apartments occupied by high-income households; and the 20% vacancy increase allowed every time a tenant moves out, which mocks "stabilization" by inflating rents sharply and giving owners a huge incentive to displace existing tenants. Again, the Council cannot repeal these provisions of state law, but it can enact a resolution urging the Legislature to act.

"From neighborhood to neighborhood throughout the New York, working and middle-income families are finding themselves priced out of this city—the young, the elderly, the poor, the middle class, everybody," DiBrienza explains. "We need to preserve and expand the supply of affordable housing, and there are many elements to this, from keeping rent levels affordable, to ensuring adequate housing code enforcement, to the creation of new housing.

"In addition to the five-point legislative package, we need increased code-enforcement and rental-assistance programs, early identification of distressed buildings and transfer to responsible management with tenant participation, proper management of city owned buildings, and the creation of new affordable housing."

DiBrienza, chair of the Council General Welfare Committee, is expected to run for Public Advocate next year when Mark Green steps down. He has led the successful Council resistance to Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's heartless welfare initiatives, such as threats to remove homeless children from their mothers, to jail homeless people, and to kick people with AIDS off of public assistance if they do not comply with "eligibility verification review" requirements beyond those already in place at the city Division for AIDS Services and Income Support.

He has also drawn wide support for his innovative proposal to create thousands of permanent government and community jobs for people on public assistance, with decent pay and benefits, to take the place of the dead-end "workfare" jobs imposed by Giuliani and his welfare commissioner Jason Turner.

"The Vallone and DiBrienza bills give tenants

something to fight for this year right here in New York City, without having to go up to Albany," Jenny Laurie points out. "Renewing the rent-control and stabilization laws with no further weakening, and closing the door on fraudulent \$2,000 regulation by making owners set forth the basis for that rent, will be a major victory, if Vallone keeps his word. But while treating some of the symptoms, it doesn't go nearly far enough to address the causes of the steadily worsening housing crisis. The DiBrienza bill, together with the resolutions to restore home rule by repealing the Urstadt law, and to repeal the worst of the recent state encroachments on rent regulations, goes much further, and is part of an overall program to attack the problem from many directions at once."

Tenants are encouraged



Pickets outside a \$1,000-a-plate dinner for City Council Speaker Peter Vallone Dec. 8. While singer Tony Bennett performed inside, protesters sang karaoke parodies like "I Left My Heart in the Landlords' Pocket." Shortly afterward, Vallone introduced a bill to renew the city's rent laws intact, instead of weakening them as he did in 1994.

to remain vigilant up through the Council vote in March. To find out how to participate in or con-

tribute to Met Council's campaign to enact these laws, call (212) 693-0553.

Attorneys: Housing Court Reform No Help to Tenants

By Kathleen McGowan

More than a year after state-level reforms restructured Housing Court, court officials say the new system is faster, more efficient, and more humane. Many Housing Court lawyers agree: For attorneys and judges, anyway, the system runs more smoothly.

But some Legal Aid and Legal services attorneys charge that the reforms have been hard on the 85% to 90% of tenants who have no lawyer. Housing Court may now move faster, they say, but it's no better at providing real justice.

The city's Housing Courts, with more than 300,000 new cases a year, have always been chaotic. Judges deal with multiple cases simultaneously, repeated adjournments are the rule, and much of the business between landlords and tenants gets hashed out in the halls.

The reforms, which began in 1998, were designed to streamline the process—expanding hours, bringing on new staff, and reorganizing a scheduling system that forced many tenants to spend the whole day waiting. Backlogs used to delay trials for weeks; now, trials can start as soon as the judge sends the case out to a separate, specialized courtroom that has a dedicated trial judge.

According to a review released by Justice Fern

Fisher-Brandveen, the city's top civil court and Housing Court judge, the reforms have done their job. "[A]ttorneys from both [landlord and tenant] sides have expressed their happiness with the Trial Parts," the report reads. "Hallway negotiation is occurring less with the new changes."

But last week, a group of Legal Aid and Legal Services lawyers sent Fisher-Brandveen a six-page memo that slammed the new system. The courts are still baffling for unrepresented tenants, they say, and the new system encourages all the other judges to quickly push cases to trial and out of their courtrooms. Landlords' lawyers use the threat of an immediate trial to intimidate tenants. Hallway deals are still rampant, court-employed attorneys don't inform tenants of their rights—and the report itself, the lawyers write, "appears to praise speed over the quality of justice."

"It's the same old, same old, with a prettier face and the court patting itself on the back for helping [lawyerless] litigants," says Legal Services' Sandy Russo, who helped draft the letter.

"The entire pressure is to get people physically out of the courtroom," fumes Legal Aid's Mimi

Rosenberg. "There's been a serious setback to the limited possibility for arriving at a just resolution to a case. You simply can't put time before justice."

Justice Fisher-Brandveen, while admitting that Housing Court could still stand improvement, defends the report's general conclusions. Starting trials more quickly can benefit both tenants and landlords, she says: "I don't think delays are to the benefit of any party."

Hallway negotiations have declined, she insists, "although the report concedes that we will never completely eradicate that." As for court attorneys, she says, "it was indicated that one in particular had some problems. We did retrain him. I checked, and he's doing much better. We are responsive to comments from the public."

Fisher-Brandveen says that new equipment to show tenants instructional videos has been delayed, but should be on-line soon. "We certainly have an open ear to what users of the court think," she adds. "Some of what they say, we're still working on."

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Homeless

continued from page 1

is only a fragment," says Patrick Markee of the Coalition for the Homeless. "If someone is denied public assistance, they will also be denied shelter. The city's court papers make this abundantly clear."

The move set off a storm of protest. Homeless advocates immediately filed three separate lawsuits to block the new rules. Virtually all of the city's "Tier II" shelters, apartment-like dwellings for homeless

families, announced that they would not cooperate with throwing people out. And on Dec. 5, over 1,000 people gathered in Union Square to hear Biblical denunciations of Giuliani's heartlessness.

"If Giuliani had been mayor of Bethlehem," the Rev. Al Sharpton thundered, "they would have put the baby Jesus into foster care." And Harlem pastor Father Bob Castle proclaimed that the Mayor's destination in the afterlife would be somewhere far below heaven.

The number of people in the city's homeless shelters averaged 23,000 a night last year, up 8% from 1998, according to the Coalition for the Homeless. They included an average of 5,000 families and almost 9,000 children.

The new rules actually go back to 1995, when Giuliani and Gov. George Pataki issued new shelter regulations. Homeless people would be thrown out of shelters for 30 days or more if they failed to cooperate with an assessment, violated shelter rules, failed to comply with a service plan, or failed to comply with any public-assistance requirement, from attending recertification hearings to obeying all workfare rules. Homeless advocates challenged them.

Early last year, the Court of Appeals, the state's highest court, refused to review a lower-court ruling that those regulations were constitutional—but could not be enforced in an arbitrary and capricious manner, and that children could not be put into foster

care because their families were evicted from shelters.

The three lawsuits against the new Giuliani rules are based on three separate court rulings on the right to shelter: the 1981 consent decree in *Callahan*, in which the city agreed that homeless men had a right to shelter; the Appellate Division's 1986 ruling in *McCain*, extending that right to families; and its 1989 *Cosentino* decision, which held that children could not be put into foster care just because their parents lacked housing.

The *Callahan* suit is before Justice Stanley Sklar, the *McCain* suit before Justice Helen Freedman, and the *Cosentino* suit before Justice Elliott Wilk.



Demonstrators in Union Square Dec. 5 denounce Giuliani's homeless policies.

STEVE WISHNIA

Rudy Rants About 'Work Ethic'

But Lets Rents Rise Beyond Workers' Means

In the context of Rudolph Giuliani's policies, his "personal responsibility" rhetoric rings as hollow and hypocritical as George W. Bush's "compassionate conservatism." "Personal responsibility" is simply code for lack of compassion. Giuliani's attitude is that wealth is the result of moral flaws; that the winners have earned special privileges and the losers are useless eaters who deserve to be punished.

This is a city where it's increasingly impossible to find even a one-room apartment for less than \$700 a month, while a first-year teacher takes home less than \$500 a week, sanitation workers start at less than \$450, a cabdriver is lucky to make \$100 for a 12-hour night shift—and a 35-hour week at minimum wage won't even gross \$200. Homelessness is the tip of the iceberg. The housing crisis reaches

well up into the middle class. The homeless are the poorest, the most vulnerable, and often the most screwed up.

But Giuliani has cut funding for affordable housing by more than half, for permanent housing for the homeless by almost three-quarters, according to the Coalition for the Homeless. He has undermined rent controls as much as he can without uncovering his political ass. And in the same way that he's reserved his criticisms of racism for cabdrivers and out-of-town baseball players, it seems that the only times he's ever talked about affordable housing have come when he was trying to justify evicting squatters and bulldozing community gardens.

Giuliani may talk about trying to teach welfare recipients a work ethic. But his housing policies are punishing people who work for a living too. —S.W.

Join the Campaign to Renew the Rent Laws

On March 31, the rent laws will expire and must be renewed in the New York City Council. In 1994, when these laws came up for renewal (as they do every three years), the Council voted to weaken the laws while renewing them, and that vote started a chain of events ending in the severely damaging compromises made in the state legislature in 1997. The real-estate lobby is planning now to weaken the laws. Tenants have the power to stop this from happening in 2000. Tenants have the power to get the laws renewed without any weakening amendments in the City Council. But we must start organizing now.

Unlike the state legislature (where the rent laws are up for renewal in 2003) where the pro-real-estate Senators represent upstate residents, the City Council members must answer to New York tenants. You can make a difference in the vote in March. Tenants must start organizing now in order to stop the real-estate lobby from weakening the laws.

What can tenants do? Tenants should start contacting their Councilmembers now. Call or write now; let your Councilmember know that you are a tenant and you want the laws renewed without weakening amendments. Join Met Council and our campaign to get the laws renewed. Help us organize a strong, political force to stop the real-estate lobby from buying votes next year. Join the campaign today.

Yes, I want to help Met Council fight back the real-estate lobby and get the rent laws renewed without any weakening amendments in the City Council in March.

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 E-mail: _____
 Day Phone: _____ Evening Phone: _____
 Council District (if known): _____

Call me about _____
 • Organizing a meeting in my building or community group • Participating in a lobbying meeting with my Councilmember • Attending rallies and demonstrations • Volunteering in Met Council's office

Return to: Jenny Laurie, Met Council, 64 Fulton St., Rm. 401, NY, NY 10038

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

LOWER EAST SIDE

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

BENSONHURST TENANT COUNCIL

1708 West 10th St., Brooklyn, 718-372-2413
Monday-Thursday 10 am-5 pm
 Call for appointment.

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

GOLES (Good Old

Lower East Side)
 525 E. 6th St. (btwn. Aves. A & B) Lower East Side tenants only, 212-533-2541.

HOUSING COMMITTEE OF RENA

Covers 135th St. to 165th St. from Riverside Dr. to St. Nicholas Ave., 544 W. 157th St. (basement entrance).
Thursdays 8:00 pm

LOWER MANHATTAN

LOFT TENANTS
 St. Margaret's Home, Pearl & Fulton Sts., 212-539-3538
Wednesdays 5 pm-7 pm

WEST SIDE TENANTS UNION

200 W. 72nd St. Room 63; 212-595-1274
Tuesday & Thursday 2-5 pm
Tuesday and Wednesday .. 6-7:45 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 212-693-0550 for information. Mon., Wed. & Fri., 1:30-5:00 pm.

My apartment is 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 _____

Send your check or money order with this form to:
 Metropolitan Council on Housing, 64 Fulton St., Rm. 401, NY, NY 10038