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Tenant Inquilino

Housing for people, not profit

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PERIODICAL

Fight Against DHCR Code Changes Continues Elected Officials Begin to Weigh In

By Dave Powell

With the state Division of Housing and Community Renewal pushing for drastically anti-tenant changes to the state's rent regulations, tenants and their advocates are trying to mobilize elected officials to defeat the plan.

On August 22, the Legal Aid Society hosted a briefing for elected officials on the DHCR's proposed changes to the state Rent Stabilization Code, which would make it easier for landlords to raise rents, even illegally, and evict tenants. Co-sponsored by Met Council and the New York State Tenants and Neighbors Coalition, the event was attended by staff members of 41 elected officials, including members of the State Senate, Assembly, City Council, and the City Comptroller and Public Advocate's offices.

Specifically, the elected officials are being asked to:

a) write a letter to Governor George Pataki demanding that the proposed changes be thrown out. b) spread the word of these proposed changes to their constituents and c) attend a press conference denouncing the changes, now tentatively set for the week of Sept. 25.

It is unclear how many of these officials have actually written to the Governor demanding that the changes be scrapped. If you have any question as to whether your representatives are moving forward on the issue, call their offices and ask. If they say they have written letters, ask for a copy. If they say they haven't written, request that they do so.

Other developments involving elected officials include the following:

On Sept. 13, City Councilmembers Stanley Michels,

Steve DiBrienza, and Sheldon Leffler sponsored a resolution asking the Governor and DHCR to throw the proposed changes out. Whether the resolution will get a hearing before the full Council rests squarely with Housing Committee Chair Archie Spigner and Speaker Peter Vallone, two of the landlord lobby's favorites. As of press time, the resolution had no number.

State Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and Housing Committee Chair Vito Lopez sent a strong joint letter to DHCR Commissioner Joseph Lynch objecting to the changes. "Having been directly involved in the changes to the laws that the proposed code purports to implement, we can unequivocally state that the proposed amendments fail to reflect the letter and

the spirit of the law," they wrote, in a letter dated May 24. "We request that the proposal be withdrawn in its entirety and re-drafted to codify and clarify existing law rather than to undermine existing statutory protections of tenants' rights."

Whether Lopez and Silver will send such a letter to Governor Pataki himself remains to be seen. The jury is also out on whether the pair will honor requests from advocates to hold an oversight hearing on the proposed changes. Stay tuned.

In June, State Senator Eric Schneiderman and 24 colleagues introduced a measure that would prohibit most of the changes. Unfortunately, it was introduced so late in the legislative session that it has little chance of passing this year. Schneiderman may reintroduce the bill

early in 2001.

Another possible player in this is State Comptroller Carl McCall, who issued a report blasting the state's policy on major capital improvements (MCIs). McCall, who is expected to run against Pataki for the governorship in 2002, may be sympathetic to opponents of the changes.

From DHCR, an Eerie Silence

While DHCR claims to no longer be accepting comments on the proposed changes, the agency has not yet moved to promulgate new regulations. By most accounts, DHCR has been very quiet as of late, perhaps waiting for the bad press and political attention to go away. Many advocates believe the agency will not make

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2000 Elections Could Mark Beginning of Big Changes

by Kenny Schaeffer

This year's state legislative elections on November 7 will offer an opportunity for major changes in the balance of power in Albany. With half a dozen vulnerable incumbents in New York City and its suburbs facing strong challenges, including Roy Goodman in Manhattan, Guy Velella in the Bronx, and Frank Padavan in Queens, the Republicans are worrying about losing their majority in the State Senate.

Redistricting Ahead

This is a matter of crucial importance to tenants in New York City, in view of the looming expiration of rent and eviction protections in 2003. The state legislature elected this

year will preside over the redrawing of electoral districts based on the 2000 Census. Every district in the state, from congressional to city council, will be redrawn to reflect changes in population since 1990. In recent decades, the state Assembly has agreed with the Republican-controlled Senate to draw districts that protect the Democratic majority in the Assembly and perpetuate Republican control of the Senate.

This has had disastrous effects for city tenants, as shown in 1997, when the Senate refused to renew the rent laws until several badly damaging amendments were added. With the changes allowing expanded vacancy decontrol

for apartments reaching \$2,000 a month rent, easier evictions through denial of due process in Housing Court, and further evisceration of enforcement against illegal rent overcharges, rents in the city have risen dramatically since then.

Liz Krueger for State Senate

Met Council has endorsed longtime activist Liz Krueger against Roy Goodman in Manhattan's East Side State Senate district. Liz Krueger has been active in the Community Food Resource Center fighting hunger and evictions, is a nationally recognized expert on hunger and housing, and worked with Met Council, the Coa-

lition for the Homeless and others to oppose unwarranted rent increases by the Rent Guidelines Board this year.

Already assured the Working Families Party (WFP) and the Green Party ballot lines in November, Krueger won a 5-to-1 vic-

tory in the Sept. 12 Democratic primary over Bob Bellinson, who ran a lackluster campaign against Goodman in 1998, yet still got 44% of the vote.

Most analysts consider Goodman highly vulnerable in November. His

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Brooklyn Fire Reveals Code-Enforcement Failures

By Kathleen McGowan

When a fire killed 13-year-old Ashley Simms last July, the city Department of Housing Preservation and Development had known for 10 months that the sprinklers in her Bed-Stuy building weren't working—an "emergency" level violation of housing codes—but failed to either force the landlord to fix them or make the repairs itself. When the fire ripped through the townhouse at 27 Brevoort Place on July 22, the sprinklers didn't work. Simms died in the flames and 17 others were injured.

In August, both Mayor Giuliani and City Council Speaker Peter Vallone blasted the city housing agency's sloppy oversight. "Somebody blew it," said the mayor. "[HPD staff] should have done a better job here."

But this wasn't a random mistake or a case that slipped through the cracks. It was the logical result of a longstanding

HPD policy—a policy that directs inspectors to simply ignore serious housing-code violations when they can't get access to buildings.

HPD inspectors often have trouble getting into buildings in order to check that repairs have been made. So the department adopted a simple rule: If an inspector goes to a building twice to check on repairs and can't get in both times, he can simply forget about the problem, write it off in his records as "deemed in compliance," and close the case. That's true even if it's considered an "emergency" violation—for example, a building like 27 Brevoort Place, which had neither functioning sprinklers nor fire escapes.

It makes HPD's records look good, it makes landlords happy, and it means more inspectors can visit more buildings in a shorter amount of time. But it doesn't do much to protect tenants. "We've been screaming for years about it,

and it's not until a fatal fire that some light gets shed on this," said Joe Corso, head of the Allied Building Inspectors Union.

HPD says it has now changed the policy. But for the families caught

in the fire, that's not enough. "I want to see someone held accountable," said Bonnie Anthony, whose son's family lost nearly everything in the blaze. "It's a shame how long the city victimized them."

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Save the Date!

Rally & Sleepover at City Hall

Sunday Oct. 1 6pm - Monday Oct 2 11am
Oct. 1 is the first day Giuliani's Rent Guidelines Board's new rent increases take effect.

All new leases and lease renewals for rent stabilized apartments after Oct. 1 will be hit with the largest increases since 1996. Landlord profits are at an all-time high, and creation of affordable housing is at an all-time low. Met Council, with the help of the NYCLU, is organizing a sleepover to protest Giuliani's overall attack on real affordable housing. Furthermore we demand:

- * The immediate removal of the most hostile, anti-tenant Rent Guidelines Board members; Chair Ed Hochman and Public Member Ed Weinstein.
- * City Council oversight of the RGB appointees; (currently the mayor appoints all 9 members).
- * Diversify the RGB!; 7 of 9 are white, 9 out of 9 are male, 9 out of 9 are "well to do", 8 out of 9 are business professionals. Most of their terms have officially expired.

TIME'S UP! The RGB should reflect New York City. Create affordable Housing!

Please save the date and sleep over if you can. "Giuliani-ville" will come equipped with music, performers, speakers, tents, cardboard, hard-headed activists and breakfast. Details to follow. Save the Date for Housing!

For more information, to offer material support (tents, etc.), or to endorse, contact: The Met Council on Housing, Dave Powell (212) 693-0553 ex.6, activemch@aol.com; Susan Howard (212) 982-9446



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EL INQUILINO HISPANO

La Lucha Continúa en Contra de Cambios Propuestos por la DHCR

Por Dave Powell

Traducido por Lightning Translations

Mientras la División de Vivienda y Renovación Comunal (DHCR, por sus siglas en inglés) promueve cambios drásticamente perjudicial a los inquilinos, estos y sus partidarios están tratando de movilizar a los funcionarios electos para derrotar el plan de la DHCR.

El martes 22 de agosto, la Sociedad de Ayuda Legal (Legal Aid Society) presentó un informe para los funcionarios electos

sobre los cambios propuestos por la DHCR al Código de Viviendas Estatal, los cuales facilitarían el alza de alquileres por los caseros, hasta ilegalmente, y el desalojo de inquilinos. El evento fue patrocinado en parte por el Consejo Metropolitano (Met Council) e Inquilinos y Vecinos del Estado de Nueva York (New York State Tenants and Neighbors Coalition); acudieron personal de 41 funcionarios electos,

incluyendo miembros del Senado y de la Asamblea Estatal, del Concejo de la Ciudad, de las oficinas del Contralor de la Ciudad y del Defensor Público.

Específicamente se pide a los funcionarios electos:

a) que escriban una carta al gobernador Pataki exigiendo que los cambios propuestos sean desechados.

b) que divulgan esos cambios propuestos a los votantes, y

c) que acudan a una rueda de prensa denunciando los cambios, fijada provisionalmente para la semana del 25 de septiembre.

Al momento de ir a imprenta, no estaba aún claro cuántos de estos funcionarios han escrito realmente al gobernador exigiendo que los cambios sean tirados a la basura. Si usted tiene alguna pregunta sobre cómo sus funcionarios electos están trabajando sobre el tema,

llame a sus oficinas y pregunte. Si ellos dicen que han escrito cartas, pídale una copia. Si dicen que no han escrito, solicite que lo hagan.

Otros acontecimientos que implican a funcionarios electos incluyen los siguientes:

El 13 de septiembre, los concejales Stanley Michels, Steve DiBrienza, y Sheldon Leffler patrocinaron una

pasa a la página 4

Los Ajustes de la "Junta de Regulación de Renta" de la Ciudad de Nueva York (Orden No. 32)

Para los contratos de apartamentos de Renta Estabilizada que comienzan el 1ro. de octubre de 2000 hasta el 30 de septiembre de 2001, 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 2000. 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 2000. 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 subvenciones, 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) establece 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 32, 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 3 por ciento por un contrato de un año y un 5 por ciento por un contrato de dos años. No se permiten incrementos para las unidades de desván vacías.

Hoteles y Apartamentos de una Sola Habitación Lo establecido es un 2% 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 2000. 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	4%	6%	
	\$500 o menos (Alquileres de \$215 o menos se alzan a \$215 después de aplicarse los aumentos)	4% + \$15	6% + \$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%
	Menos de \$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



la DHCR

viene de la página 3

resolución, pidiéndole al gobernador y a DHCR que desecharan los cambios propuestos. Si la resolución recibirá una audiencia ante el Concejo en pleno o no, resta completamente sobre el presidente del Comité de Vivienda Archie Spigner y el vocero Peter Vallone, dos de los favoritos de los caseros para cabildear. Al momento de ir a imprenta, la resolución no tenía número.

El vocero de la Asamblea Estatal Sheldon Silver y el presidente del Comité de Vivienda Vito Lopez enviaron una fuerte carta conjunta al comisionado de la DHCR Joseph Lynch objetando los cambios. Ellos escribieron en una carta fechada el 24 de mayo de 2000, "Al haber estado involucrados directamente en los cambios a las leyes que proponía implementarse con los cambios propuestos, podemos declarar sin temor a equivocarnos que las modificaciones propuestas no cumplen con su obligación de reflejar la letra y el espíritu de la ley. Solicitamos que la propuesta

sea retirada y que se vuelva a redactar para que establezca y aclare la ley existente en lugar de debilitar las protecciones reglamentarias de los derechos de los inquilinos." Aún está por verse si Lopez y Silver enviarán dicha carta al gobernador Pataki. Tampoco se sabe si estos dos recibirán las solicitudes de los abogados defensores para celebrar una audiencia de supervisión sobre los cambios propuestos. Siga en sintonía.

En junio, el senador estatal, Eric Schneiderman y 24 colegas introdujeron una medida que prohibiría la mayoría de los cambios. Desgraciadamente, la medida fue introducida tan tarde en la sesión legislativa, que tiene pocas oportunidades de ser aceptada en su estado actual. Se espera que Schneiderman volverá a introducir el proyecto de ley a principios del año 2001.

Otro posible actor en esto es el Contralor Estatal Carl McCall, quien dio un reporte atacando fuertemente la política estatal sobre Mejoras Importantes de Capital (MCI por sus siglas en in-

glés). Es posible que McCall, quien se espera compita contra Pataki para gobernador en el 2002, pueda ayudar a la causa contra los cambios en la DHCR.

Desde la DHCR, un silencio extraño.

Mientras la DHCR afirma que ya no está aceptando más comentarios sobre los cambios propuestos, la agencia aún no se ha apurado en promulgar las nuevas normas. Según se dice, la DHCR ha estado muy silenciosa últimamente, tal vez esperando que se desvanecan los artículos periodísticos y la atención política en contra de ellos. Muchos defensores creen que la agencia no hará ningún movimiento antes del día de las elecciones (7 de noviembre) por temor a causar que la prensa hable mal de los republicanos. Los abogados activos de los inquilinos en este tema continúan reuniéndose regularmente y considerando todas las estrategias legales. Pero debemos recordarles; es la presión política lo que nos ha hecho llegar hasta aquí y será más de lo mismo lo que evitará estos cambios. Las

dudas de la DHCR es un buen signo, pero no durará mucho. Ahora es el momento de movilizarnos.

Lo que usted puede hacer

1) Escriba a Pataki. Si usted ya lo ha hecho, haga que sus vecinos o su comunidad se agrupe para escribir cartas. Si no ha escrito, hágalo hoy. Aparece una carta de muestra en inglés en la página 7.

2) Comuníquese con sus funcionarios electos. Pregúnteles si ya han escrito a Pataki denunciando los cambios. Anímelos a alertar al electorado y a acudir a la rueda de prensa la semana del 25 de septiembre (comuníquese con Met Council para recibir más detalles.)

3) Manténgase en contacto con Met Council. Estamos planeando una manifestación contra los cambios propuestos para el otoño. Los detalles se publicarán en el número de octubre de Tenant. Llame o envíenos un correo electrónico si desea ayudar: (212) 693-0553 x6 o a: activemch@aol.com.

Stadium Plan Threatens Chelsea, Clinton

By John Fisher

Two years ago, voters were treated to the strange spectacle of City Council Speaker Peter Vallone becoming a populist—calling for a public referendum on Mayor Giuliani's plan for a new Yankee Stadium on the West Side rail yards at Tenth Avenue and 33rd Street. The vote was derailed by Rudy's charter-revision scheme and Vallone has been strangely silent ever since, especially now as the plan is back, much larger and much more serious.

The Mayor, developers, dot-commers and financiers are calling for a complete makeover of Manhattan's West Side. A private committee, NYC2012 (which includes many developers), is calling for an 80,000-person stadium that would also be home to the New York Jets football team after it leaves the New Jersey Meadowlands in 2008.

But the stadium is just the frosting that masks larger plans. They also want to build a new Madison Square Garden a few blocks to the west, extend the #7 subway line (for a cool \$700 million) westward to an expanded Javits Center, and build several high-rise hotels and other office buildings. An entire block of active businesses would be bulldozed in the process. And while there's not enough money for city housing inspectors, much of this would involve direct or indirect public funding, rezonings, and tax abatements.

No wonder developers are salivating and no wonder Vallone, who gets much of his campaign contributions from this crowd, isn't touting a public referendum. While most West Side politicians are already against the stadium, Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields is, not surprisingly, being noncommittal by offering

an alternative *only* if 'Plan A' falls apart. And Senator Charles Schumer is right in there with Rudy—he created a "gang of 35" business leaders (with no community voice) to map out the makeover.

Underlying all these proposals is the desire to convert the West Side between Chelsea and Clinton into part of the city's central business district, replete with massive office towers. Every few decades the real-estate industry decides it wants to expand Midtown to the river. With the sustained real-estate boom, they see this goal now within striking distance, whether or not there's a neighborhood in the way.

Even though the area may look underdeveloped to some, it brings to the city tremendous worth and vital services—among them manufacturing, printing, transportation, film production, package distribution, and various service industries. This area contains a significant portion of the garment center, one of the city's most important industries, and is also a growing residential area.

But the impact will be more than just traffic gridlock on the West Side around the stadium. The Olympics must be recognized for what it is—a franchise worth billions of dollars that allows global corporations to massage their egos by being official sponsors to a captive audience and an oppor-

tunity for politicians and developers to remake significant portions of a cityscape under the guise of the "Olympic spirit."

Four years ago in Atlanta, up to 15,000 tenants, homeowners and small businesses were displaced to make way for the Olympics. Rent-gouging is now occurring in Sydney, Australia, and the benefits of similar impacts are now being seen in Salt Lake City, where the 2002 Winter Olympics will be held.

In Atlanta, newspapers ran editorials about the "Techwood Problem"—Techwood being one of the country's first public housing projects—which just happened to be in the way of Olympic and corporate makeover plans. Even though it's 12 years away, the *New York Times* and *Daily News* have already run editorials about the "opportunities" on the far West Side. Even before Techwood residents were forced out, the police stopped patrolling the project and evictions increased. Atlanta's homeless were swept up and offered one-way tickets out of town, and city officials boasted about the first Olympic venue to be completed—a new jail.

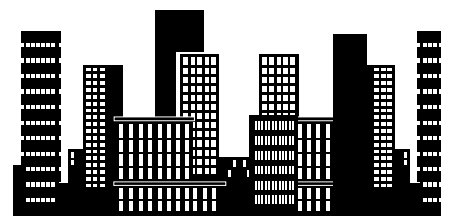
Many tenants were evicted by landlords hoping to rent housing to tourists during the Olympic months. The *New York Times* rented an apartment complex, leaving nine tenants looking for new apartments. Some tenants

faced rent hikes from \$475 to \$3,000 a month.

And in Sydney, where the 2000 Summer Games are just getting underway, Beth Jewel of RentWatchers (a coalition created just to document how the Olympics affects tenants), reports, "although the Sydney Olympic stadium was not built on existing housing, the Olympic Games did lead to the eviction of thousands of tenants through accelerated gentrification, development and unaffordable rent hikes. Up to 20 suburbs were affected in the Olympic 'inner ring,' which spans from Bondi Beach on the coast to Homebush in the West. The legacy of these games will be a permanent loss of affordable accommodation and an oversupply of badly built expensive apartments. As a minority benefit financially from the Games, the homeless, low-income tenants, and the whole social diversity of the city suffer an enormous loss."

This is the part of the coming Olympic legacy that the New York Organizing Committee doesn't want to talk about. The games may represent international diversity and sportsmanship, but the benefits accrue to corporations, developers, and those who make better livings than most tenants do.

Whether it's the impact on traffic, rents or any number of other reasons, the stadium, subway and new "Far West Central Business District" all bode for new ills in our city.



Franz Lehman, 1915-2000

by Dave Powell

"The voice of the majority may be that of force triumphant, content with the plaudits of the hour... the dissenter speaks to the future and his voice is pitched to a key that will carry over the years...the prophet and the martyr do not see the hasting throng, their eyes are fixed on the eternities."

—Benjamin Cardozo, Associate Supreme Court Justice, 1932-38



On June 24, 2000, the people of New York City lost a dedicated activist and a great human being: Franz J. Lehman.

Franz was born in Munich, Germany in 1915. In 1937, his family fled the Nazis and settled near Albany. It was there that Franz met his lifelong partner, Rosel, herself a German refugee. In January of 1941, Franz was drafted

into the US army and eventually sent back to Europe. He served until the end of the war and was briefly involved with US military efforts to reconstruct the German government. However he became quickly disillusioned at US authorities' willingness to reinstall former Nazis. He returned to the US in the fall of 1945, and in 1946 married Rosel, who was already living in Manhattan.

In 1948, the couple moved into the recently built Stuyvesant Town, off 14th Street. At the time, Stuy Town had an official policy of barring black families from living at the complex. Franz and Rosel joined with a group of neighbors to form the Committee to End Discrimination in Stuyvesant Town. In defiance of the policy, residents helped a black family move into a vacant apartment. Initially, Franz and other men

in the Committee took shifts guarding their door each night.

In response to these efforts, landlords Met Life attempted to evict members of the Committee. The eviction attempts ultimately failed. Met Life changed its policy of official discrimination in 1950. In 1951 the Committee got the Brown-Isaacs Bill passed in the City Council, which barred racial segregation and discrimination in New York City's publicly assisted housing. This was 13 years before the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 desegregated public housing nationwide.

For most of this period, Franz worked as a freelance photographer. In the early 1950s, he took a job as a railroad leverman. He was active in his union (BRAC, Local 1474) and retired in 1978. In 1976 Franz revived Labor Research Association's *Railroad Notes*, a newsletter about labor issues in the railroad industry. For 10 years Franz was that publication's reporter, editor and voice.

Over the course of his life, Franz was active with many groups, including the Committees of Correspondence, the Lower East Side Call to Justice, Coalition for a District Alternative, the Labor Party, Labor Research Association, the Stuyvesant Town Tenants Association, New Yorkers Against the Death Penalty, and, of course, Met Council. At Met Council, he served as a board member, and was also an active volunteer.

In May, while on his way to deliver petitions to the Manhattan office of Governor George Pataki, Franz was hit by a car. The petitions called for the repeal of the Rockefeller drug laws, which impose lengthy mandatory-minimum sentences for non-violent drug offenders. In the hospital, his first concerns were about the petitions. It was typical of Franz: more concerned about the plight of others even while critically injured. Franz died on June 24, after nearly a month of battling in intensive care.

That's an incomplete history of what Franz did. What I can't tell you so

easily is who he was as a man and what he meant to us at Met Council. Franz was one of the most compassionate, intelligent, and humble people I've ever met. He loved art, music, film and literature. He was an excellent photographer and an astute writer. He was a great person to be around and had a terrific sense of humor. He had a smile that would make you smile back.

Franz was the type of guy you learned from just by being around him. He had a simple resolve that informed his every move. Wherever there was work to be done for social justice, that's where you would find Franz. He did the work. He was much less interested in giving speeches or arguing over which method was best. He simply got things done.

At the same time, his analysis was always sharp. When he wasn't stuffing envelopes, collecting signatures or walking picket lines, he was reading, writ-

ing, discussing, and re-evaluating. When he did offer his opinion, you wanted to listen. Franz saw the interconnectedness of issues. You could talk to him about everything. Tenants' rights, police brutality, sweatshops, environmental degradation, Mumia Abu-Jamal, labor history, Cuba, the prison-industrial complex, neoliberal economics—you name it. He was never raging or polemical about any of it. He simply had convictions and he lived by them.

His level of dedication transformed us all, and we will never forget him.

* * *

A memorial for Franz Lehman will be held on Sunday, Sept. 17 at 2 p.m. at St. Marks Church in the Bowery (East 10th Street and Second Avenue, Manhattan).

The Rockefeller Drug Law

Franz Lehman died protesting what, ironically, is one of New York State's largest programs for housing poor people of color.

Almost one-third of the state's 71,000 prisoners are jailed under the harsh mandatory minimums of the "Rockefeller drug laws," enacted in 1973 when Nelson Rockefeller was governor. A stunning 94% of them are black or Latino.

The laws are best known for their 15-years-to-life mandatory sentences for possession of four ounces or more of heroin or cocaine—more than the state requires for rape, manslaughter or assaulting a police officer with a weapon. However, about 60% of the state's drug prisoners were convicted of low-level sales or possession. Half a gram of cocaine, about \$25 worth, gets a one-year minimum. The related Second Felony Offender Law mandates 4-1/2 to nine years for a second offender selling as little as \$10 worth of cocaine or heroin.

According to Human Rights Watch lawyer Jamie Fellner, most of the 600-odd prisoners serving the 15-to-life maximum

are couriers, mules and other peripheral-to-the-deal figures. "There are no big dealers in prison," former state prison commissioner Peter Preiser told an Albany forum in early 1999.

The Rockefeller laws, said Assemblymember Jeffrion Aubry (D-Queens) last year, have neither been "effective for individuals nor cost-effective for the public." Since they were enacted, the state's prison population has increased almost sixfold. They completely failed to prevent the spread of crack in the '80s, and heroin and cocaine prices have both dropped dramatically since 1973.

—Steven Wishnia

* * *

For more information on the Campaign to End the Rockefeller Drug Laws, contact: Lower East Side Call For Justice, phone and fax: (212) 964-9681; e-mail: lesefj@es.com; or Justice Works Community, 1012 Eighth Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11215; phone: (718) 499-6704, fax: (718) 832-2832, e-mail: justiceworks@msn.com

5,000 Protest Poverty, Homelessness at GOP Convention



STEVEN WISHNIA

Defying Mayor John Street's ban on protests in downtown Philadelphia during the Republican Convention last summer, 5,000 people marched down Broad Street on the convention's first day to protest poverty and homelessness. The protesters completed a three-mile trek through South Philly in fierce, humid heat, but police barred them from getting within several blocks of the convention site, even closing down the nearest subway station.

"They're trying to push the poverty under the rug, but there's just too much poverty in Philadelphia," says Willie Baptist of the Kensington Welfare Rights Union, a North Philly community group that organized the march. "We're witnessing a systematic dismantling of our rights and entitlements we deserve as residents of the US—the dismantling of public housing, privatization of education." Baptist added that the march had been organized under heavy police surveillance.

Over 400 people were arrested during the convention protests, with some jailed for as long as 10 days before arraignment.

—Steven Wishnia and Bill Weinberg

City Cuts Off Emergency Housing for People Living with HIV/AIDS

By Jennifer Flynn

Since late August, clients seeking emergency housing from the city's Division of AIDS Services and Income Support (DASIS) have been told to sleep in the streets.

One such DASIS client was recently released from St. Vincent's Hospital. His caseworkers from both a local community organization and the hospital called DASIS to ensure that he would have housing. They were both told that he should come to DASIS' Amsterdam Maintenance Center at 400 Eighth Ave. Manhattan. When he got there at 11 A.M., he was told that he had arrived too late to be housed. He was given a referral to Open Door, a drop-in center, where he spent the night sleeping in a chair. The next day both he and his case worker returned to the maintenance center,

where they were told there was no guarantee that he'd get housing.

Stories like this have been commonplace since August 23, when, after a year and a half of providing emergency housing assistance, DASIS suddenly couldn't find placements for its clients. The recent crisis finds the agency in direct violation of Local Law 49, which requires that it provide "medically appropriate transitional and permanent housing" to homeless people with AIDS. Recognizing that for a person with AIDS, it is not "medically appropriate" to sleep on the street, DASIS' own Policy and Procedures Manual says clients should be provided with housing on the same day they request it.

Earlier this month, City Councilmember Christine Quinn and AIDS activists

spent two nights in DASIS offices, forcing them to follow the law and provide emergency housing placements. On Friday, Sept. 1, at 7:30 P.M., 11 clients were placed in the ValArms Hotel. When the clients arrived, they learned that the address they had been given was a bank. They spent the entire Labor Day weekend sleeping in the streets. They returned to the Amsterdam DASIS office and waited for another placement. Again, workers began to give the wrong address until advocates highlighted the mistake. Workers corrected the address, but gave the wrong hotel name. When clients arrived at the address, they were confused by the discrepancy and some returned to the DASIS office.

After a Council oversight hearing, DASIS pub-

lished an official letter outlining their "change in policy," which included stricter procedures about signing in at hotels and earlier curfews. Yet, they still have not admitted that their centers are simply not providing emergency housing to hundreds of HIV-positive New Yorkers. Activists estimate at least 150 people with AIDS are being turned away from the centers every night.

In response to the city's inability to provide emergency housing for homeless, HIV-positive New Yorkers, the New York City AIDS Housing Network has established an emergency Center Watch. Volunteers wait with clients to ensure that the Amsterdam Center (the city's largest DASIS office) remains open until all clients are provided with emergency housing placements. They then accom-

pany the clients to the placements to make sure they can actually get in.

After years of fighting to have people with AIDS placed in decent, medically appropriate housing, activists and PWAs find themselves back at square one.

On Thursday, Sept. 28, the City Council will hold a follow-up oversight hearing at 9:45 a.m. at City Hall. DASIS representatives are expected to testify. AIDS and housing activists are asking all New Yorkers to come out and show their support for the campaign to save the right to emergency housing!

If you are interested in volunteering with the Network's Center Watch, you can call (212) 260-1558 or e-mail flynn@dti.net

Jennifer Flynn is executive director of the New York City AIDS Housing Network.

NYC Rent Guidelines Board Adjustments (Order No. 32)

for Rent Stabilized Leases commencing Oct. 1, 2000 through Sept. 30, 2001, 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, 2000. 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, 2000. The above guidelines and vacancy bonuses do not apply to an apartment which was rent controlled on that date.

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

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

Lease Type	Current Legal Rent	One-year Lease	Two-year Lease	
Renewal Leases	more than \$500	4%	6%	
	\$500 or less (Rents that are \$215 or less brought up to \$215 after increases applied)	4% plus \$15	6% 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

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, 2000. 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.

Housing Court to get a determination of the legal rent.

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 32, 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 3 percent for a one-year lease and 5 percent for two years. No vacancy allowance is permitted on vacant lofts.

Hotels and SROs
The guideline is 2 percent for



DHCR

continued from page 1

a move before Election Day for fear of causing bad press for Republicans. The tenant attorneys active around the issue continue to meet regularly and weigh all legal strategies. But we must remind you; it is political pressure

that has gotten us this far and it is more of the same that will prevent these changes. The hesitation from DHCR is a good sign, but it will not last long.

Now is the time to mobilize.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

1) Write Governor Pataki. If you've done it already, get your neighbors or community group to write letters. If you haven't written yet, do it today. A sample letter appears below.

2) Contact your elected officials. Ask them if they've written to Pataki denouncing the changes. Encourage them to alert their constituents and to attend the press conference the week of Sept. 25 (contact Met Council for details).

3) Keep in touch with Met Council. We are planning a demonstration against the proposed changes for the fall. Details will be published in the October issue of Tenant. Call or e-mail us if you want to help out: (212) 693-0553 x 6 or activemch@aol.com

Governor George Pataki
Executive Chamber, State Capitol
Albany, N.Y. 12224
phone: (212) 681-4580
e-mail: gov.pataki@chamber.state.ny.us

Dear Governor Pataki:

I am aware that you are up for re-election in 2002.

I am a tenant writing to you about the changes proposed by DHCR to the State Housing Code. I am calling upon you as Governor to prevent these changes from becoming permanent. As you know, these changes do not merely favor landlords, they undermine the foundation of rent regulation.

As governor you are responsible for the conduct of the state agencies under your authority. If you allow DHCR to dismantle what is left of our tenant protections, tenants will hold you accountable. Please help us avoid this disaster. Throw out the proposed changes.

Signed,
Jane Q. Tenant

Slumlord Sale Scrutinized

By Julia Hood

Last month, the federal housing department auctioned off a building to one of the city's most notorious landlords, Baruch Singer of Triangle Management. Singer became infamous last fall and winter in a series of *New York Post* articles that portrayed him as an old-fashioned slumlord, complete with nasty pitbulls, lousy management, and decaying properties.

That didn't stop him from snapping up the 52-unit building near Morningside Park for \$2.58 million. But now, the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development is already having second thoughts about the sale. HUD, as mortgage insurer, is in the process of repossessing the building at 437 Manhattan Ave. from its previous owners. The property went on the auction block last month.

Bidders did not have to meet any special criteria, aside from being able to pay the price tag. But Singer's sketchy record is well known in New York City. He owns an assortment of crumbling Harlem buildings—one of the buildings he's involved with collapsed in 1995, killing three people—and has come under special scrutiny from the city's housing department lawyers for his persistent maintenance problems.

Two days after the sale, the head

of HUD's New York office told *City Limits* that his office would be launching an investigation into Singer's business practices and won't finalize the sale until it's convinced that Singer will take care of the property.

"When HUD sells foreclosed property, we are always concerned about prospective landlords with a history of deficiencies and violations," said Charlie King, the secretary's representative for the New York regional HUD office. "Based on the information that we have to date, this is certainly a concern with respect to Mr. Singer."

Singer did not return repeated phone calls made to Triangle Management. Conditions of the sale include a rider that the purchaser make about \$600,000 in repairs within one year, and maintain the building as "affordable housing" for 20 years.

Ivy Thomas, president of the residents association, said tenants are apprehensive. The building has 285 code violations on record, according to the city's housing department, and tenants have had to battle for vital repairs. "We were scared already," Thomas said. "Now we really have to worry."

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Attention All On-line!

If you have an e-mail address, join the **Met Council "ACTIVE! list."** We'll send you alerts about demonstrations, hearings and other activities.

Simply send us a message, subject heading "subscribe", to: activemch@aol.com

Some of the Proposed Changes by DHCR to the Rent Stabilization Code

Overcharges

DHCR will give new tenants in recently deregulated apartments only 90 days in which to file an overcharge complaint. In vacant rent-stabilized apartments, the legal rent will no longer be determined by the rent registered with the DHCR, but by the "rent agreed to" between a landlord and tenant. That means whatever rent the landlord can get away with lying about at the time.

Extra Charges

Landlords will be able to make "surcharges" on virtually anything they want, (gas and electricity usage, cable and Internet, washing machines, etc.) without any regulation. Landlords will be allowed to charge as many 20% vacancy increases in a year as they can get away with. The Rent Stabilization Code currently forbids landlords from charging more than one vacancy increase within a given Rent Guidelines Board annual cycle (meaning that in cases where a tenant is evicted or leaves "mid-lease," the landlord can only charge the incoming tenant a vacancy increase and not subsequent tenants within the same year).

Eviction

DHCR will make it easier for tenants to be evicted based on landlord's "personal use," extending this to include the in-laws of landlords. Eviction based on "non-primary residence" will be made easier. Eviction based on "luxury decontrol" will be expanded. Tenant "harassment" of landlords will be made grounds for eviction.

MCIs

DHCR will now require tenants to hire engineers or architects to refute a landlord's fraudulent major capital improvement charges. DHCR will require the same for tenants who try to file for decreases in rent due to violations in the apartment or building. Landlords will be allowed to file MCI applications without providing full proof and records relating to the MCI. DHCR will no longer be required to send the full copy of the landlord's application to affected tenants.

Services/Repairs

Landlords will be able to collect rent increases even when they do not provide basic services to tenants. In instances where tenants succeed in getting a rent reduction in these proceedings, the landlord will no longer be required to certify maintenance of these conditions, once the rent has been "restored."

Will DHCR's proposed changes affect rent-controlled tenants?

You've probably noticed that most of the changes are to the "Rent Stabilization Code," and so a rent-controlled tenant may wonder "Does this affect me?" The answer is "yes, absolutely." Because DHCR policies are played out against both rent-controlled and rent-stabilized tenants, the changes will affect both groups almost identically. The big exception is in cases of rent overcharges, which are fundamentally different (and less common) for rent-controlled tenants than rent-stabilized tenants.

Elections

continued from page 1

reputation as being “pro-tenant” is largely undeserved: He is Deputy Minority Leader of the Senate under anti-tenant fanatic Joe Bruno, and as the Republican Party chair for Manhattan he is captain of a team that includes Charles Urstadt. Urstadt, a Manhattan real-estate tycoon, was on the Pataki transition team that called for ending rent regulations, and as state housing commissioner in 1971 was the author of the “Urstadt Law” (see sidebar) that deprives New York City of the right to home rule in addressing its housing-affordability crisis.

Republican Desperation

After several Republican incumbents, including Goodman, Velella and Padavan, sought the Working Families line and were rejected, the state Republican Party brought a lawsuit unsuccessfully challenging the right of the Working Families and Green parties to nominating candidates in this year’s elections. The lawsuit was based on a mischaracterization of how the two parties needed to organize themselves to take ad-

vantage of the ballot access each narrowly won by gaining 50,000 votes in the 1998 gubernatorial election. The State Supreme Court found the case to be without merit, ensuring that the WFP and the Greens will continue to become increasingly serious alternatives to the Republicans’ and Democrats’ corporate priorities in the coming years.

Democratic Bosses Challenged in Bronx and Brooklyn

The Sept. 12 primary was significant because it also revealed considerable cracks in the usually homogenous Democratic Party, particularly in Brooklyn and the Bronx. As Bronx Democratic county leader Roberto Ramirez has supported Velella—one of two State Senators from the city to vote against renewing the rent laws intact in 1997—the Democratic senate campaign committee under Sen. Eric Schneiderman (Manhattan-Bronx) encouraged insurgent Lorraine Coyle Koppell to run against Velella. Ramirez retaliated by running a candidate against Coyle Koppell, but she won a solid victory.

Ramirez also suffered defeats in the three other races he contested, including an attempt to unseat liberal Congressman Elliot Engel. “Voters Give Bronx Cheer to Ramirez,” ran a headline in the *New York Post*, while Engel noted, “I guess the big mighty Democratic machine isn’t so mighty after all. The people of the Bronx have rejected Roberto Ramirez and his dictatorial style of politics.”

Several incumbents were also challenged in Brooklyn. Democratic county leader Clarence Norman Jr. faced a primary contest for his own Assembly seat. In Congressional races, longtime incumbent Edolphus Towns turned back a spirited challenge from progressive Dan Ford, who also has WFP support, while Rep. Major Owens, a former vice chair of Met Council, narrowly defeated Councilmember Una Clarke, who in 1994 voted to allow vacancy decontrol for apartments costing over \$2,000. While Met Council endorsed Owens, we regretted his campaign’s attempt to throw Clarke off the ballot based on a

dubious question about her immigration status when she first voted years ago—a blunder which only helped Clarke in a district where a majority are Caribbean immigrants.

As a sign of how politics may be opening up, even Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver is facing a challenge in November, from Green Party candidate Ray Dowd. Silver has been on an extended losing streak. In 1997, he agreed to the enormous weakening of rent and eviction laws. In 1998, he provoked a budget contest with Gov. Pataki and lost, resulting in the defunding of dozens of programs across the state. In 1999, he agreed to give up hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue for NYC from the commuter tax, ostensibly to help a Democratic candidate for an open state Senate seat who ended up losing anyway. And last May, Silver survived a challenge to his leadership of the assembly. On September 5, his longtime confidante and spokesperson Patricia Lynch announced

that she was leaving his staff.

Looking Forward

With term limits kicking in locally next year, this year will be the first of three successive elections that will determine the fate of rent and eviction protections in 2003. Ending the Republican majority in the state Senate this year would be a major victory. Next year, the entire City Council, the mayor, controller, public advocate, and four borough presidents will be elected. And in 2002, Gov. Pataki is expected to seek re-election, with the intent of finishing the job of killing rent regulations, as has been done by Republicans from Boston to California. The entire state legislature will again be up for election in 2002, but in the new districts to be drawn by the legislature elected this year.

Participate in Met Council’s political action! call 212-693-0553, ext. 6. Volunteer for Liz Krueger’s exciting grass-roots campaign! Call (212) 689-7295.

Vallone Stifles Anti-Urstadt Vote

Met Council is working vigorously against the 1971 Urstadt law, both by seeking its repeal in Albany and by trying to force City Council Speaker Peter Vallone to allow the Council to vote on a resolution demanding its repeal. Last spring, Vallone blocked consideration of the measure, which was supported by Councilmembers Steve DiBrienza, Eva Moskowitz, Margarita Lopez, Chris Quinn, Bill Perkins, Stanley Michels, Sheldon Leffler, Ronnie Eldridge and others, on the flimsy pretext that it might jeopardize the Council’s position in a lawsuit involving rent-control formulas. Although that lawsuit was decided months ago, Vallone continues to block consideration of the resolution.



E-mail Met Council
metcouncil@aol.com

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>LOWER EAST SIDE
Cooper Square Committee
61 E. 4th St. (btwn. 2nd Ave. & Bowery)
Tuesdays 6:30 pm
Closed August, reopens September 5.</p> | <p>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</p> |
| <p>BENSONHURST TENANT COUNCIL
1708 West 10th St., Brooklyn, 718-372-2413
Monday-Thursday 10 am-5 pm
<i>Call for appointment.</i></p> | <p>LOWER MANHATTAN
LOFT TENANTS
St. Margaret’s Home, Pearl & Fulton Sts., 212-539-3538
Wednesdays 5 pm-7 pm</p> |
| <p>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</p> | <p>VILLAGE INDEPENDENT
DEMOCRATS
26 Perry St. (basement), 212-741-2994
Wednesdays 6 pm-7:30 pm</p> |
| <p>GOLES (Good Old Lower East Side)
525 E. 6th St. (btwn. Aves. A & B) Lower East Side tenants only, 212-533-2541.</p> | <p>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</p> |

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

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