

Attorney General Schneiderman, de Blasio will announce effort to go after owners who use illegal tactics to force out tenants

The campaign comes in response to 'a significant uptick in complaints regarding tenant harassment.'

BY GREG B. SMITH / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS / Thursday, February 19, 2015, 12:01 AM

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City and state officials are set to launch a coordinated crackdown on greedy landlords accused of trying to harass tenants from their rent-stabilized apartments.

New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman and Mayor de Blasio will announce on Thursday an aggressive new effort to go after property owners who use illegal tactics to force out tenants paying lower rent.

The campaign comes in response to "a significant uptick in complaints regarding tenant harassment" — especially in gentrifying neighborhoods, officials said.

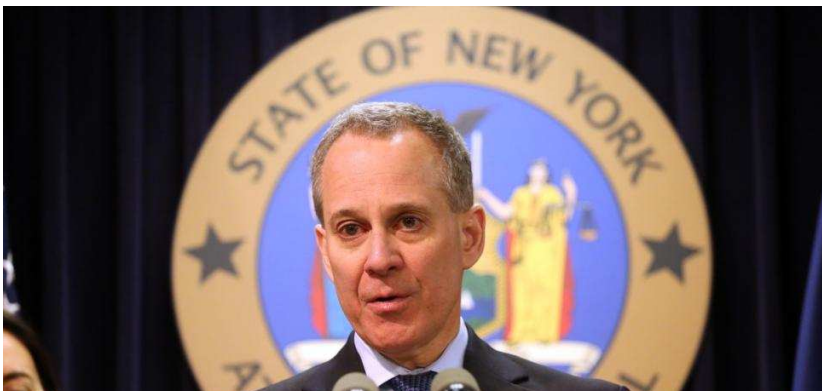
Schneiderman has opened 10 investigations into allegations of landlord harassment in the last year — triple what his office had done in any prior year, officials said. In the last 18 months alone, the AG has fielded more than 200 complaints of "systematic harassment" by landlords, mostly in Brooklyn, Manhattan and the Bronx.



MICHAEL GRAAE/NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman and Mayor de Blasio are going to take on property owners attempting to force out tenants using illegal tactics.

"Most landlords are law-abiding and responsible, but as the real estate market in New York City heats up, we have seen an influx of bad actors looking to turn a fast buck," Schneiderman said.





JEFFERSON SIEGEL/NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

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The Tenant Harassment Prevention Task Force will take particular aim at landlords who rip up apartments under the guise of “renovations” to drive low-income tenants out.

Already the agencies involved — including the state Housing & Community Renewal Department and the city’s Health, Buildings and Housing Preservation Departments — have opened investigations into a litany of allegations.

Investigators are looking at properties where construction is ongoing in defiance of stop-work orders and sites where asbestos containment rules are ignored.

In some cases, landlords have even removed boilers and ventilation systems — supposedly for repairs — to make life hell for tenants, authorities say.



SHANNON STAPLETON/REUTERS

Mayor de Blasio (left, seen here with Police Commissioner Bill Bratton) will be joining Schneiderman in announcing the effort.

In the last year, the Daily News has reported that Schneiderman is investigating two major Manhattan landlords.

One landlord, multimillionaire Steven Croman, [hired an ex-NYPD cop who allegedly harassed and intimidated tenants](#), barging into their apartments and following them to work.

Schneiderman filed a “cease and desist” order against the former cop, Anthony Falconite. The matter is pending.

Schneiderman is also looking at landlord Meyer Orbach, who runs 2,000 units mostly in Manhattan. Tenants say [Orbach regularly files frivolous lawsuits to get them out of his buildings](#). That investigation is also ongoing.

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