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The Landlords Wrote the Laws. Schneiderman Wants to Change Them.

May 3, 2017 *Featured* (<http://westviewnews.org/featured/>), *Neighborhood*

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By George Capsis



(<http://westviewnews.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/CAPSIS-LANDLORDS-MAY17-1.jpg>)

END OF GREED: Landlord Steve Croman's greed has wiped out decades-old family businesses on Christopher Street, prompting Attorney General Eric Schneiderman to offer laws that will end 20 years of landlord harassment immunity. *Photo by Maggie Berkvist.*

"Attorney General Eric Schneiderman is giving a press conference on tenant harassment and you gotta go," demanded Nelly Godfrey who lost her Christopher Street restaurant to Steve Croman—the West Village landlord who is now facing prison time and is easily vying for the number one spot as "The Worst Landlord in New York."

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We drove up the “glitter and swank” of Park Avenue until we crested the hill at 110th Street and saw before us NYCHA-studded Spanish Harlem. We faced an approaching train running on the elevated tracks held up by blackened stone arches and, bang, at 115th Street we discovered the press conference taking place in a caged public area right under the tracks.

As the conference broke up, a crowd of mostly Hispanics poured out with local politicians offering benevolent smiles to their landlord-harassed constituents. As Schneiderman spilled off the high podium right into my arms, I found myself saying, “You are one of the most articulate politicians we have. Why don’t you run for mayor?” I believe he mumbled something that allowed for the possibility.

Now for the shocker—“In the past 20 years, not a single landlord has been convicted of harassment of a rent-regulated tenant!”

Current State law demands that prosecutors reach an inexplicably high bar. For example, they have to prove physical injury. So, OK, that explains the repertoire of harassments, like turning off the heat and hot water and months and months of messy lead paint dust construction. But, wow, no convictions in 20 years—that is a shocker.

So how does Schneiderman plan to change the laws to, at last, trap, hold, and convict some of these amoral landlords?

The press release talks about ending “deceptive lending practices.” Croman’s technique was to buy cheap tenements housing nothing but rent-regulated tenants paying dirt cheap rents and then getting bank loans against them showing market rate rents. This is the crime that will probably send him to prison

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because it is out and out fraud, but it seems to be a standard technique (Croman's lawyers have offered restitution money if he gets just two years of prison).



(<http://westviewnews.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/CAPSIS-ATTORNEY-MAY17.jpg>)

ATTORNEY GENERAL SETS THE TRAP:

In 20 years, no slum landlord has ever been convicted of tenant harassment. However, at a recent Harlem press conference, Attorney General Eric Schneiderman (center) vowed to change the rules and finally hold slumlords accountable. Nelly Godfrey (pictured to the left of Schneiderman), who lost her restaurant

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Lima's Taste to land- lord Steve Croman, who is presently being prosecuted by Schneiderman.

Photo by Henry Mori

The Attorney General is also offering that he is making it illegal to harass or endanger a rent-regulated tenant. (Croman used an ex-cop who would burst into an apartment with documents in his hand that might have been an illegal immigrant extradition order but was actually a contract to vacate for a piddling fee—"Sign here, sign here...")

"Our current laws are outdated, ineffective, and totally inadequate to keep tenants safe from

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