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Opinion: Check your eligibility for the Croman restitution fund

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By State Senator Brad Hoylman

Notorious landlord Steve Croman first made the Village Voice's Worst Landlords list in 1998. He made it again in 2003. And again in 2006.

The landlord equivalent of teflon, Croman terrorized tenants, dragging them into protracted court battles. Tenants lived in dangerous and intolerable conditions. Croman pled guilty to grand larceny and other felony charges in 2017. He was released from jail in 2018, only to buy a building this year on the other side of my district that is home to the historic White Horse Tavern.

Croman is just one of many bad actors who, eager to recoup on their substantial real estate investments, resorted to abusive and exploitative tactics to drive out rent-regulated tenants. They made millions. Many of them went unpunished.

Croman, for his part, was at least forced to pay \$8 million in restitution funds—the largest ever monetary settlement with an individual landlord—to the thousands of rent regulated tenants he tormented and preyed upon to evict them from their homes and convert their units to market rate apartments.

The deadline for tenants to submit claims for the second round (out of four) of settlement payments from the Croman Tenant Restitution Fund is Thursday, June 27. If you were a tenant of his, I encourage you to check on your eligibility (<http://www.cromanrestitutionfund.com/>) and get your paperwork in. Of course, while eligible tenants will receive some financial compensation for the horrors they endured under Croman, it will never be enough.

That's why we made it a priority this session to pass the strongest package of tenant protection laws in state history this month: the Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act of 2019. Among other changes, we repealed vacancy decontrol, limited IAIs and MCIs, and made New York's rent laws permanent—removing the incentives that encouraged slumlords like Croman to raise rents and deregulate apartments.

Finally, evicting rent-regulated tenants to make a return on an investment will no longer be seen as the cost of doing business in neighborhoods like the East Village. Instead, it will be seen for what it really is: a crime.

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