



This politician wants to let J-51 tenants know if their landlord is overcharging them

Brad Hoylman sends letter to HCR commissioner

By [Konrad Putzier](#) | August 07, 2017 08:30AM



28 Bedford Street in Greenwich Village (credit: Propertyshark) and state Senator Brad Hoylman

Do tenants have a right to know if their landlords may have been overcharging them on rent? Brad Hoylman says yes.

The state senator on Monday is sending a letter to the New York State Department of Homes and Community Renewal's commissioner RuthAnne Visnauskas urging her to inform tenants if the agency suspects their apartments were illegally removed from rent stabilization under the J-51 tax abatement program.

"It's baffling to me that New York State informs landlords who've received J-51 benefits but not tenants when it suspects apartment units have been unlawfully removed from rent stabilization. Tenants are the ones who need this information," Hoylman said in a statement.

The letter is the latest stage in the ongoing battle over the J-51 program, which offered landlords tax breaks in return for upgrades at their buildings. Over the course of two decades, landlords of around 50,000 J-51 apartments charged their tenants market rent, even though they are legally required to keep the units rent stabilized for the duration of the abatement.

In January 2016, Gov. Andrew Cuomo ordered landlords to [register all apartments](#) in J-51 buildings for rent stabilization. The order affected 4,149 buildings across the city. But six months later, ProPublica reported that the state [isn't informing tenants](#) if they may be the victims of illegal deregulation.

Over the past two years tenants in J-51 buildings have filed several lawsuits against their landlords alleging rent overcharges. Last month, for example, the nonprofit Housing Right Initiative [organized a lawsuit](#) by tenants at 28 Bedford Street in the West Village against their landlord Rudd Realty Management.

Other landlords that have been hit with J-51 suits in recent months include [Larry Gluck's Stellar Management](#) and [Carmine Properties](#), which is owned by the co-creator of "Captain Planet," Barbara Pyle.

Last weekend, the local political club Village Independent Democrats held a canvassing event outside 28 Bedford and another property, 61 Carmine Street, to inform tenants of possible rent overcharges. Hoylman, who attended the event, said the fact that advocacy groups are cluing in tenants about the J-51 program "begs the question why isn't the state doing it."

"The ongoing work of groups such as the Housing Rights Initiative has uncovered just how much more needs to be done to do right by tenants," Hoylman wrote in his letter. He urged Visnauskas to "proactively notify tenants who may be living in illegally deregulated apartments and advise them of their legal rights."