



Notorious Landlord Steve Croman Sentenced to a Year on Rikers Island

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By Allegra Hobbs ([//www.dnainfo.com/new-york/about-us/our-team/editorial-team/allegra-hobbs](http://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/about-us/our-team/editorial-team/allegra-hobbs)) | October 3, 2017 1:07pm
 @AllegraEHobbs (<http://twitter.com/AllegraEHobbs>)



Steve Croman.

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MANHATTAN — Notorious landlord Steve Croman on Tuesday was sent to a Rikers Island facility to begin his one-year sentence after pleading guilty to grand larceny, falsifying business records and criminal tax fraud.

Croman committed tax fraud in 2011 by failing to withhold state taxes from some employee paychecks and fraudulently snagged millions in refinancing loans from banks between 2012 and 2014 by claiming rent-stabilized units in his building were market rate, according to State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman (<https://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/20170606/east-village/steve-croman-plea-deal-attorney-general-sentencing-fraud>), whose office conducted a yearlong investigation into the landlord.

He was indicted on 20 felony charges that could have landed him in prison for 25 years, but secured a plea deal with the attorney general's office that granted him a more lenient sentence for pleading guilty to only three of the charges.

He was given one year on Rikers Island for each of the three felony charges, all to be served concurrently.

Though Croman himself declined to speak at his sentencing Tuesday morning, Judge Jill Konviser had a few words for the landlord and alluded to the relative leniency of the sentence he was about to serve.

"You've had the benefit of good attorneys and the benefit of an eminently fair prosecutor," said Konviser, who went on to say, "Let's be clear, Rikers Island ain't the Ritz."

Konviser also referenced the extension (<https://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/20170919/civic-center/steve-croman-sentencing-delayed>) she'd granted Croman two weeks earlier — his sentencing had been scheduled for Sept. 19, but his attorneys asked for an extension so he could observe the High Holy Days.

"I hope you spend your days thinking of those you harmed. I hope you spend your days thinking of the religious principles I delayed the sentence for," she said.

Tenants of Croman-owned buildings, who had been angered by the delay two weeks earlier, balked at the meager sentence but admitted it was better than nothing.

"I don't think it's enough time — the public needs to be protected from him," said Cynthia Chaffee, a cofounder of Stop Croman Coalition (<https://stopcromancoalition.org/>), who lives at 346 E. 18th St.

Chaffee, who says she now suffers from asthma as a result of dust and debris from illegal construction at her building, said the criminal charges have done little to benefit the tenants still living in his buildings.

"Ever since he was arrested he's been as worse as ever," she said. "We didn't have heat, he's dragging people to court still, he's not giving people their leases. I mean, it's business as usual."

Another tenant called the "system" that allowed Croman such a light sentence "twisted."

"Better than nothing," shrugged the tenant, who would not give her name. "I noticed a kid got six years for possession of narcotics and this guy gets one year for everything he's done — a little bit of a twisted system, but better than nothing."

The attorney general last year also brought a civil case (<https://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/20160509/east-harlem/tenants-celebrate-indictment-of-controversial-landlord-steve-croman>) against Croman alleging the landlord tried to evict rent-stabilized tenants with aggressive harassment tactics, which remains ongoing. Under current law, that lawsuit could not lead to criminal charges, though the attorney general has introduced legislation (<https://ag.ny.gov/press-release/ag-schneiderman-introduces-legislation-criminally-crack-down-tenant-harassment>) that would make it easier to prosecute landlords for harassment tactics.