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They Want You Out by any Means Necessary!

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HAZARDOUS CONDITIONS: Renovations lead to stairwells full of dust and debris.

Dear George:

Rent regulated tenants (mostly seniors) suffer anxiety every time the rent laws are set to expire. These tenants should be able to enjoy their apartment instead of having to worry it will be deregulated out from under them. At this time of their life, they're on fixed incomes that don't increase as much as rents, food and transportation, and these landlords are tarnishing what should be their Golden Years.

Who among you have not lived through the nightmare of an apartment being renovated next to, above, or below you? Living in a construction site for weeks and sometimes months is intolerable—surrounded by dust, containing possibly asbestos, lead, crystalline silica, cadomin and other toxic elements. Breathing in dust that could also be getting into our food as we cook our family dinners.

A coating of dust blankets everything in the apartments. We've all experienced burning eyes and loud noises and some may develop asthma, shortness of breath or a future cancer from all the dust the renovations produce.

One tenant recalls wearing a suit, shirt and tie and by the time he got downstairs to the ground floor to leave his building, he and his suit were covered in grit, dirt and dust. He felt he needed to shower again—this is no way to face a day in NYC.

And then, of course, there are the courts that seem to be there for the landlord. Despite the fact that it's called Landlord-Tenant Court, it is indeed a collection agency for said landlords.

Frivolous case after case is brought to this court for the sole purpose of wearing down the tenants emotionally and financially. These cases should be reviewed by the courts on their merits. Many tenants cannot afford a lawyer, and it is a known fact that when a tenant doesn't have a lawyer, they lose.

Landlords, on the other hand, have lawyers on retainer all the time. It costs them nothing extra to bring tenants to court. Who's paying for this? As usual, the taxpayer.

We know of one landlord, Steve Croman, who actually brought a case against one of his tenants alleging the tenant owed seven cents because the tenant was short one penny a month for seven months. It would be laughable except that it is so tragic and true.

This same landlord, Steve Croman, dragged another tenant into court as she attended to her hospitalized, ninety-eight year old dying mother. They accused her of living with her mother, and not at her rent regulated apartment. During that tragic time, she was dragged to court. The landlord wanted her regulated apartment, so she was falsely accused of not living there. Just imagine the emotional ramifications of being dragged into court while having to take care of a loved one on her deathbed...all due to the greed of this landlord.

And many other stories. You've all heard them. Landlords want these rent regulated apartments and they'll go to any and all lengths and tactics to get them.

Steve Croman (and let us not forget the Mrs., Harriet) are not alone in their endless quest to get back apartments from tenants. There's Pinnacle, Icon, The Shalom Brothers, and Ben Shaoul. The latest ones on the scene are Mahfor, Aron & Joel Israel, Marolda, etc.

State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman and NYC Mayor Bill De Blasio have formed a task force "to look into" the activities of these afore-mentioned predatory landlords, and we look forward to their findings. Much more must be done to protect the tenants of this great city.

To quote long-time-gone tenant activist Esther Rand, "They're not the lords of the land, but the scum of the earth." Oh Esther, how we need you now.

—Cynthia Chaffee and Mary Ann Miller of the STOP CROMAN COALITION

Cynthia Chaffee and Mary Ann Miller began the STOP CROMAN COALITION on Bastille Day, July 14, 2007.

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