

RENEWING THE RENT LAWS:

Why Rent Laws Matter

A tenant's apartment is the tenant's home. But if Rent Stabilization is taken away from an apartment, that means the tenant has no right to have the lease renewed when it expires, and the landlord can charge whatever rent he or she wants to. Tenants would have no protection.



By Richard Gottfried, State Assembly Member, 75th District

Thanks to New York's rent protection laws, you can have a stable home even if you don't own a house or a co-op or condo. It means tenants can have real roots in the community. And neighborhoods like ours can have the exciting diversity that makes New York work.

What's happening:

The New York State Rent Stabilization law expires on June 15. The Governor and the State Assembly wanted to include the renewal of the rent laws as part of the state budget, the Senate leadership would not agree. The Governor's support will be crucial to help us meet our goals.

I am a co-sponsor of the Assembly's recently passed omnibus housing bill (A. 2674-A), which incorporates many long-time priorities into one

bill. These include: extending Rent Stabilization and Rent Control for five more years; repealing vacancy decontrol (destabilization); repealing the Urstadt law, which prohibits New York City from enacting its own rent laws; requiring more disclosure to new tenants about improvements that increase rents; allowing MCI increases to expire once

improvements have been recouped; reclaiming deregulated units under certain circumstances; and raising the threshold for "luxury decontrol" to a rent of \$3,000, and raising the threshold for "high-income decontrol" to \$300,000.

What you can do:

Write to Governor Cuomo and let him know that you are counting on him to preserve the Rent Laws: Andrew M. Cuomo,

Governor of New York State, NYS State Capitol Building, Albany, NY 12224. Also write to the Senate Majority Leader, Dean Skelos, and let him know what the Rent Laws mean to you and your neighborhood at: Legislative Office Building, Room 909, Albany, NY 12247, or by email.

The Governor's support will be crucial to help us meet our goals. Please write to him.

May 19th Forum: Prison/Parole Reform



The CRDC will be hosting a discussion of Prison and Parole Reform with guest speaker, Judith Brink, Executive Director of Prison Action Network, Linda King and Maria Reyes, who have family members with incarcerated loved ones facing parole. The event will be May 19th 7-9 PM at the Elliot Center, 441 West 26th St.

LEADERSHIP LETTER

Everyday Heroes



I remember a conversation I had a few months ago with our District Leader, Mary Dorman. Although I have always known her to be absolutely fearless, she seemed a bit nervous

because she was about to argue her very first case before the New York State Court of Appeals, our state's highest court. As a highly experienced litigator, Mary wasn't suffering from mere performance anxiety; she was worried because there was so much at stake for her clients.

Those clients — two very hard-working former NYC police officers — had seen their careers destroyed by a homophobic senior officer and backed up by department hierarchy. They were removed from desirable postings where they were doing well for the communities they were assigned to help. Things were also made so uncomfortable for them that they left the force well shy of retirement age. Why? Simply because one of them wanted to hire someone perceived to be gay and the other one supported her in that decision.



Mary Dorman wins a jury award in gay discrimination court case

Working over several years and through various levels of the court system, Mary helped these people as they struggled to rebuild their lives and regain their sense of dignity and self worth. When the Court of Appeals handed down its ruling on March 31, 2011, it was unanimous, with even Pataki appointees joining in.

Next time you see Mary, congratulate her. We should be proud of Mary and other CRDC members who stand up for what is right, even when it might be easier to do otherwise. Mary is just one of my "everyday heroes" in CRDC. Who are yours?

Steven Skyles-Mulligan

2011–2012 N.Y.S. BUDGET: Less Money, More Debt, and More Need

Even in the best of economic times, it's never "easy" to balance the State's budget. This year it was particularly difficult because our State government had less money and more debt, while the need for public services has only increased. This is not a problem unique to New York, 44 States are facing a combined budget deficit of over \$112 Billion this year.



by Liz Krueger,
State Senator,
26TH District

I knew that painful cuts had to be made to vital programs, but I believed that the only fair scenario was one in which the sacrifices were shared by all. Unfortunately, my Republican colleagues don't feel the same way. Sadly, this budget disproportionately hurts poor families, the disabled, and women and children, who statistically rely on government more than others, while the richest individuals and companies enjoy an increase in tax breaks.

Revenue that could have been used to save countless services was simply ignored and roughly \$29 billion in tax expenditures was left on the table, untouched. These expenditures are designed to accomplish certain public goals, but I argue that we should carefully review each and every one to ensure that they are, in fact, achieving these goals, because I am certain that many do not. Many of you have heard the debate over the high earners tax, or the millionaire's tax, a surcharge on the wealthiest New Yorkers that could generate billions for the state of New York in just two years. While I adamantly argued, along with my Democratic colleagues, that this surcharge should not expire, the Governor and Senate Republicans insisted that we exempt those in the most affluent tiers of society from contributing their fair share, allowing the rich to get richer while the poor shoulder the burden

of cuts. How is that in the best interest of the public?

Also frustrating, was the fact that the renewal and strengthening of rent regulation laws was not included in the budget, as I, and many others, had hoped and fought for. While the Governor has fiercely stated that he will not introduce any new taxes, the irony is that an expiration of the rent regulation laws would actually be an overwhelming tax on middle class New Yorkers. If we don't protect the millions of units of affordable housing in and around New York City, then we will effectively be taxing people out of their homes. But the fight is not over and Governor Cuomo has publicly stated that he wants to both renew and strengthen rent regulation laws. I plan to hold him to his word.

Fortunately, there was some silver lining to the otherwise bleak budget. I am happy we were able to successfully restore money to Senior Centers, allowing them to keep their doors open. Another bit of good news, which is of particular importance to Manhattan where we face serious overcrowding in schools, is that the final budget did not include the Governor's original proposal to cut 50% of school building aid. This proposal would have cost NYC between \$400 and \$600 million in school construction reimbursement next year, Mayor Bloomberg claimed, would result in the City renegeing on the already approved school capital development plans. Luckily, we legislators from NYC were able to remove this language from the budget.

There is also some solace in the fact that very difficult fights were resolved in an orderly and timely manner, but I would argue that deference to punctuality should not be overly praised when so many groups and communities have lost so much.

I do recognize the needs for cuts, and voted for those budget bills that I felt implemented cuts in a responsible manner. But when it came down to it, I voted against other parts of the budget because I could not vote yes on those portions that granted reprieve to individuals and corporations that have the most, while balancing the budget on the backs of those who have the least.

Sadly, this budget disproportionately hurts poor families, the disabled, and women and children, who statistically rely on government more than others, while the richest individuals and companies enjoy an increase in tax breaks.

CLUB RESOLUTION UPDATES

CLUB LETTER: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A HEALTH COURT February 2010

On 3-16-2011, NYS District Attorney Cyrus Vance, Jr. and Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman announced the opening of a Mental Health Court in Manhattan. Shortly after the D A's election in January 2010, C.R.D.C. sent him a letter expressing our support for such a court and the announcement will go a long way in addressing the problems criminal defendants with mental disorders encounter, in our county, once they enter the criminal justice system and help them obtain the vital mental health services they require. We did not get everything our letter asked for — the Adjournment in Contemplation of Dismissal ("A.C.D.") be granted to defendants pending their "graduation" from a court monitored treatment program was unheeded.



By Lee
Sinovoi, Exec.
Committee
Member, CRDC



Paul,
Goetz, Exec.
Committee
Member, CRDC

COMMENT ON ECONOMICS:
**Economics
 Of The Academy Awards**

The February Academy Award for the best documentary film went to “Inside Job.” Among the other nominees for best documentary film was the film “Gasland.” Both of these films are ‘must sees.’



By Maarten De Kadt, Vice President, CRDC

They describe corporate excesses in our country. Both of them describe what corporate leaders get away with in their ruthless pursuit of profit. Both of them describe how the pursuit of profit hurts ordinary individuals.

“Gasland” reveals the dangers of hydrofracking. One of its starkest images is of burning water coming out of a kitchen faucet.

This burning water is a result of the injection of chemical laced water into the ground in order to release deposits of gas in rock formations 10,000 feet below the ground. The film makes clear that this chemical cocktail injected into the ground has caused damage to ground water. That damage affects the water we drink. Hydrofracking is being pursued but has not been implemented in New York City’s drinking watershed. Governor Patterson authorized vertical drilling (the least dangerous form of hydrofracking) just before he left office and it is moving ahead in New York State. Fortunately, that governor continued the moratorium on the much more dangerous horizontal drilling version of hydrofracking.

It is amazing to me that they can even consider allowing any hydrofracking near the water supply of approximately 10,000,000 people. The temptation is to drill in the Marsalis Shale deposit that has already been tapped in places like Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia, with demonstrated damage to those drinking water supplies. The Marsalis Shale deposit extends well into New York State. The film leaves viewers with something to do. It gives websites to visit, politicians to write to, and has followed up with an active campaign to prevent hydrofracking and its consequent dangers.

“Inside Job” is frightening in a different way. It reviews how this country’s financial leaders made and continue to make choices that favor big business and hurt individual people. These financial hoodlums issued risky securities, called debt swaps, some based on underlying mortgages while others were based on other debt swaps. They all crashed along with the housing bubble. (Paul Krugman’s March 14th column reports on the ruthless pursuit of fees to the detriment of ordinary householders by big banks in the ongoing mortgage restructuring fiasco.) It is

not only financial corporations taking advantage of the people, it is the government’s leaders, including former Treasury Secretary Lawrence H. Summers, Robert E. Rubin, Henry M. Paulson Jr., and now Timothy F. Geithner, as well as former President George W. Bush, and former chairman of the Federal Reserve Alan Greenspan who all considered those insecure securities, secure.

Not only does the film damn individuals and financial institutions, financial rating agencies are correctly charged for their fraud as well. These include Moody’s, Standard & Poor’s, and Fitch, each of whom gave high ratings to the securities and to the companies in question. The list of complicit companies is long. It includes: the now bankrupt Lehman Brothers, Citigroup, Merrill Lynch, Bank of America, Goldman Sachs, to name only a few. For all its very good information, this film leaves the viewer with nothing to do. It seems to say, “Just sit there and take it.” You suffer foreclosure while the bigwigs, drinking safe water, put their ill found money in the bank. This filmmaker should have thought more about organizations that are resisting the financial excesses occurring in this country and helped the viewer make contact with them. A short, brave speech at the Academies could not overcome this lacking.

Both films form an interesting, if not scary, unit. “Inside Job” is very much a complement to “Gasland” by its emphasis on how the leaders of large profit-taking corporations get away with so much of what they should not be doing. As a progressive Democratic club, we must continue to work to oppose financial policies favoring the rich, including corporate excesses, tax reductions for the rich, inappropriate fee taking and cutbacks in services for the rest of us.

It is amazing to me that they can even consider allowing any hydrofracking near the water supply of approximately 10,000,000 people

**NYS Assemblymember Deborah J. Glick
 Invites You to a Panel Discussion on
 Reproductive Rights**

If we don’t protect her rights,



she will never know she lost them.

Wednesday, May 4th, 6:30pm
 Cooper Union

41 Cooper Square (Corner of 3rd Avenue and 7th Street) Benjamin Menschel Boardroom (LL101)

PO Box 1120
Old Chelsea Station
New York City, NY 10113-1120

Chelsea, Madison Sq., Flatiron, Rosehill



UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, May 7th, 12-2:30 pm

CRDC Spring Brunch

Nisos Restaurant

176 8th Avenue (at 19 Street)

Thursday, May 19th, 7-9 pm,

Prison / Parole Reform, & Endorsement of Judges

(after panel's report), Elliot Center,
441 West 26th Street, between 9th &
10th Avenues)

Saturday, May 21st

CRDC Street Fair

6th Avenue

Executive Committee Meetings:

May 5th, June 2nd, July 7th

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