



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Bill Perkins

Senator Bill Perkins' Thoughts On Enhancing New York's Rent Regulations

BILL PERKINS February 24, 2011

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The New York rent regulation laws protect the security of over one million household, which contributes a lot protecting the economic vitality of the region. To allow these protections to lapse, eliminating our major source of affordable housing would mean certain disaster. Disaster has happened before and it can happen here, unless we work to avoid what's obvious.

When rent control laws were lifted in Boston and Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1995, the result was predictable. A mass exodus from both cities resulted from unprecedented rent increases and condo conversions. A study commissioned three years later showed that rents has increased by 54 percent in formerly rent-controlled apartments and the rate of condo conversions soared to mind 1980's levels.

Reports prepared for the Community Development and Human Services Departments of Cambridge showed that advertised rents doubled for all size apartments, evictions cases increased, waiting lists for public and Section 8 housings assistance mushroomed while condo conversions rose dramatically. Ironically, Section 8 housing was actually undermined, because the chance to double and triple rents made Section 8 vouchers unattractive to landlords.

This sounds like my district a few years ago, where every neighborhood experienced accelerated gentrification. Only it could have been, would have been, much worse, without rent regulations. By the same token, we can increase our affordable housing stock by preserving and enhancing our rent regulations. For the sake of livable, affordable, viable cities, this is what we must do.