



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Adriano Espaillat

Extending and Expanding Tenant Protections to Avert an Impending Housing Crisis

ADRIANO ESPAILLAT March 1, 2011

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Sen. Espaillat, Senate Dems, NYC Elected Officials, & Housing Advocates Call For Renewal and Strengthening of Rent Regulations to be Included in SFY 2011-12 Budget

(New York, NY) – With rent regulation laws that protect over 1 million units of affordable housing in New York City dangerously close to expiring, Senator Adriano Espaillat was joined by his Senate colleagues, City elected officials, and over 150 advocates to call for the immediate extension and expansion of tenant protections.

To prevent the expiration of rent regulations and the most significant “tenant tax” in the history of New York, which could force over a million New Yorkers from their homes, Senate Democrats are calling for Sen. Espaillat’s omnibus tenant protection bill (S.2783-A) to be included in the SFY 2011-12 budget. The laws governing rent regulation are set to expire on June 15, 2011. Between 1994 and 2010, it is estimated that over 300,000 units of affordable housing were removed from rent regulation.

“Raising rents on middle-class and poor families that are already struggling in this tough economy is tantamount to a crushing tax that will drive New Yorkers from their homes,” said Senator Adriano Espaillat, Ranking Democrat on the Senate Housing Committee. That’s why I have introduced legislation strengthening rent control and other crucial regulations that protect tenants and stabilize communities across New York. As elected officials, leaders, and grassroots activists, we stand united in fighting to preserve the millions of homes that might be lost if rent regulations are allowed to expire on June 15th.”

Mary Tek, spokesperson for the Real Rent Reform campaign, said, “We thank Senator Espaillat for recognizing that our current, weakened rent laws have resulted in the loss of over 300,000 affordable homes for New York’s families. We need real rent reform that not only renews rent protections, but also strengthens them by repealing vacancy destabilization. Without these steps, over 1 million families face unsustainable rent hikes leading to increased homelessness, destabilized communities, and the further erosion of New York’s economy.”

Senate Democratic Conference Leader John L. Sampson said, “To maintain our communities, grow our businesses, and keep middle-class families in their homes, we must extend and expand tenant protections. If rent regulations expire over a million New Yorkers could be driven from their homes by a devastating tenant tax. Including tenant protections in the budget process will safeguard tenants and stop an affordable housing crisis from crippling New York.

New York City Public Advocate Bill de Blasio said, “These laws are the only thing standing between our city and the largest affordable housing crisis in this country’s history. If we don’t act here and now, hundreds of thousands of working and middle class families could lose their homes. We must live up to our historic responsibility to keep the more than million apartments under threat affordable.”

Key Components of S. 2783- A/ Espaillat:

- Repeals vacancy destabilization and re-regulates most of the apartments that have been lost through this loophole in the last two decades.
- Allows New York City and suburban municipalities to bring former Mitchell-Lama and Section 8 buildings under rent stabilization.
- Reduces the statutory vacancy bonus from 20% to 10%.
- Reforms preferential rent loophole that enables landlords to increase stabilized rents by hundreds of dollars when tenants renew their leases.
- Reforms the provision that allows landlords to empty entire buildings by claiming they need more than one unit for themselves or their family members.
- Reforms the Major Capital Improvement (MCI) program by making rent surcharges temporary and which end when the landlord has recovered the cost of the improvement.

- Reforms the Individual Apartment Improvement (IAI) program by reducing the monthly rent increase from 1/40th to 1/60th of the cost of the improvement.
- Adjusts high-income deregulation thresholds to more accurately represent inflation.
- Repeals the Urstadt Law which would restore home rule powers over rent and eviction legislation to the City of New York.

Ana Maria Archila, Executive Director, Make the Road Action Fund, said, "Immigrant renters in New York City confront serious challenges finding safe, decent, and affordable housing. The deregulation of thousands of rent regulated housing units has been disastrous for immigrants, drastically cutting the supply of affordable housing in our communities. We cannot wait any longer. We must repeal vacancy decontrol this year."