

This Deck is Stacked against Tenants!



The NYC Rent Guidelines Board sets rent adjustments for one million rent-stabilized apartments. Should this nine-member board be a HOUSE OF CARDS, or should it represent the average working New Yorker?

The mayor appoints all the members without consultation from the City Council and controls the votes of the five public members through the chairman. This would be great if we had a pro-tenant mayor, or at least a mayor who wanted to preserve affordable housing. But we don't, and we haven't since 1993. How about giving City Council Members who represent Sunset Park, East Harlem, Jackson Heights, Flatbush, Red Hook, and Fordham a voice in the board appointments so that the RGB reflects the city's residents?

Tenants living in apartments with serious violations still have to pay rent increases when they renew their leases. Why not have a system that stops landlords from getting rent increases when they aren't maintaining their buildings?

The Rent Guidelines Board sets increases without examining landlords' profits, so that when the price of oil goes up, the landlords get a high increase even if they're making money hand over fist. This year, the price of oil has gone up, but so have landlords' profits — so maybe it's time to give tenants a break!

The mayor engineers the final vote.

While the public expects the RGB to debate issues and hash out their differences in public, the actual vote is planned behind the scenes by the chair. The two tenant members, Adriene Holder and Ron Languedoc, do a great job – but they have only two votes. They and the two landlord members do all the debating. But on the day of the vote, Chairman Markus proposes a guideline and all of the public members vote for it – no debate, no re-voting – that is it! How do they come to the number? No one knows – even though the Open Meetings Law requires deliberations to be in public.

And then the Mayor says the vote is fair.

The landlord members will tell reporters that the increases are too low and the tenant members will say the increases are too high and the public members will say little or nothing. The mayor will say that both the owners and the tenants are unhappy, so the increases must be fair. In fact, the mayor engineers the vote by picking a number and getting the chair to twist the arms of the other public members to vote for it. How can it be fair if the RGB always passes rent hikes, even when landlords' expenses go down?

Let's Fold This House of Cards and Win Reform of the RGB!
How? See other side!



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Tired of playing with a stacked deck? Help get the Duane/Latimer Rent Board reform bill passed by the state legislature. This bill would:

Require the City Council (and suburban legislatures) to confirm mayoral (or county executive) appointments of rent board members, so that the people voting for rent adjustments reflect the full city, not just investment bankers and real-estate professionals, the way they do now.

Prohibit landlords with serious violations from getting rent increases. Landlords will miss a given year's rent increase if they have serious violations. This will give tenants a real weapon to get repairs and restore services.

Base rent adjustments (notice we don't say increases) on landlords' actual expenses and incomes. Under the Duane/Latimer bill, landlords would have to file their income and expense statements with the rent board at the same time they file with the Department of Finance. Landlords have to file these anyway, but the board gets the information a year late. If the board has up-to-date information on what landlords need to run their buildings, and what their profits are, it can ensure that they are getting a fair return.

Get rid of the two-year guideline and lease renewals. The RGB uses a Ouija Board to determine the 2-year guideline. Lease renewals are really unnecessary, and the process is often used to harass tenants. Duane/Latimer would make rent-stabilized tenants statutory tenants. There'd be no need to renew the lease; tenants could stay unless they weren't paying the rent or were violating the rules or law.

Spice up the debate. Under this bill, the board would have three tenant members and no others (just kidding). The bill provides for three tenant members, three landlord members, and three public members. The chair would REALLY have to bargain with the tenant and landlord members to get a vote passed. No more fake debates and invisible vote fixing!

Stop Playing Games With Tenants' Lives! Reform the Rent Guidelines Board!



How can you help? Join the campaign!

Contact your state senator and your state assembly member and ask them to sign on to the Duane/Latimer bill (Senate 8235/Assembly 11097).

R3 Campaign Brought to you by: CWA Local 1180, DC 37/AFSCME AFL-CIO, Goddard Riverside, Housing Conservation Coordinators, Janel Towers Tenant Assoc., London Terrace Tenant Assoc., Mitchell-Lama/PIE Campaign, Met Council on Housing, New York Immigration Coalition, New Settlement/CASA, SEIU Local 32 BJ, Tenants & Neighbors, Tenants PAC, Stuytown/Peter Cooper Village Tenant Assoc. (and the list is still growing...)