



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Daniel L. Squadron

Senators Squadron, Duane; Assemblymembers Glick, Kavanagh Join At-Risk Tenants to Call for Passage of Legislation to Stop Abuse of "Owner Occupancy" Evictions

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NYC Electeds Stand with Rent Regulated Tenants Who Would be Protected from Eviction They Currently Face

New York, NY – Elected officials, at-risk tenants, and tenant advocates gathered today to urge the State Senate to pass a bill on Thursday (S-2642A/Squadron) that would stop abuse of “owner occupancy” evictions of rent-regulated tenants. If passed, Senator Squadron's bill would prohibit the eviction of tenants of 19-21 Barrow Street, who joined Senator Squadron at the rally. Many have lived in their apartments for more than twenty years.

The bill would restrict owner occupancy evictions of rent-regulated units to a single dwelling unit, to be used as the landlord's primary residence, and would prohibit the eviction of tenants who have lived in their apartments for more than 20 years.. The bill passed the Assembly, where it was sponsored by Assemblymember Vito Lopez. It was included on the draft agenda for the Senate session for Thursday.

State Senator Daniel Squadron, who sponsors the bill in the Senate, said, “This a loophole that landlords have pushed a McMansion through. Too many people have already lost their homes, and we are here today to say enough is enough – it's time to put a stop to abuse of ‘owner occupancy’ evictions. This is a common-sense update to the law that will assure that tenants don't have to live in fear. I'm calling on my colleagues in the Senate to vote tomorrow to close the loophole that allows landlords to evict a whole building at once.”

David Abramowitz, a 72 year old tenant of 19-21 Barrow Street who has lived in his apartment for 34 years, said, “This would a be a win for all rent stabilized tenants, and especially senior citizens. I have lived in my apartment since 1975 and I like it here. It would be very difficult to move at my age.”

“I applaud Senator Squadron for introducing this bill in the State Senate,” said Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer. “When my office submitted an amicus brief to the Court of Appeals in 2007 supporting the rights of the tenants of 47 East 3rd Street, I was appalled

by the notion that a landlord can evict all rent stabilized and controlled tenants to use the building for his or her own personal benefit. Government must use all of the tools available to protect tenants from building owners with unscrupulous intentions.”

“Senator Squadron has proposed a sound legislative fix to the loophole in our rent laws that allows building owners to evict all of their tenants, ostensibly to convert the apartments into a single residence for personal use,” said New York State Senator Thomas K. Duane (D, WFP-Manhattan). “I am proud to be working with Senator Squadron to secure swift passage of this urgently needed legislation that sets reasonable guidelines for owner occupancy and will stop such mass evictions once and for all.”

“There are many loopholes that weaken our laws protecting tenants, but the one that allows so-called ‘personal use’ evictions is among the most egregious,” said Assemblymember Brian Kavanagh, a prime sponsor of the bill in the Assembly. “Wealthy people should not be permitted to create mansions on the cheap by displacing numerous families from their homes. Current law not only allows this pernicious practice, but in some ways encourages it. It’s high time we end it.”

Assemblymember Deborah Glick said, “We have seen the negative impact of vulture capitalism throughout our economy, from the loss of small neighborhood businesses to the accelerating loss of housing for many working and middle class New Yorkers.”

New York City Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn said, “The ongoing attempt to displace tenants at 19 Barrow Street seems a clear example of the ways unscrupulous landlords abuse the owner occupancy provision for personal gain. Tenants need to have strong protections to make sure that they are not pushed out of rent stabilized units through a loophole in the law. My colleagues and I have informed the Rudd Realty Management Corporation of their legal obligations, and we will continue to work with residents to monitor the situation and

pursue legal action if necessary.”

“For years, about a dozen of my neighbors at 47 E. 3rd St. fought to stay in their homes after their landlord claimed he needed the entire tenement building his family of three,” said City Councilwoman Rosie Mendez. “My neighbors lost their homes and were displaced because of the judges’ interpretation of the current law. Something is wrong with the law when you can evict many families to make room for one. Could 100 families be evicted? We need this legislation now to stop mass ‘owner occupancy evictions’.”

Judith Goldiner, Supervising Attorney at the Legal Aid Society said, "The Legal Aid Society commends the leadership of Sen. Squadron in moving this important legislation forward. Landlords should not be allowed to take over multiple rent stabilized apartments and force out long time residents. This legislation will solve this injustice."

"Squadron's bill will close a major loophole in the rent laws" said Steve Herrick, Executive Director of the Cooper Square Committee. "We've already seen 9 households evicted from a building in the East Village at the end of August, and other mass evictions are taking place in NoHo and the West Village. The state legislature must act now to stop rent stabilized buildings in NYC from turning into single family homes for the wealthy".

Raymond Kenny, a disabled tenant who has lived in the building for 17 years, said, “I would be so happy if I can stay in my apartment. I love my apartment and have put a lot of love and care into it over the years to make it a home. I love the West Village also. It has been my home for 17 years now. Being now disabled, it would be very hard for me to find a new place and adjust to a new routine."

Eric Sharff, who has lived in the building for 15 years and is facing eviction, said, “I have lived in my home for over 15 years and if I am forced out of my apartment it will make it near impossible for me to continue living in the city with high rental rates and limited income."

Also at the rally were former residents of 47 E. 3rd Street, who were recently victims of a mass owner-occupancy eviction. If passed, Senator Squadron's bill would prevent abuses like the situation at 47 E. 3rd Street.