



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brad Hoylman-Sigal

New York Today: Fixes for a Broken Housing System (NYTimes)

BRAD HOYLMAN-SIGAL May 24, 2018

Senator Hoylman's legislation appeared in the 5/24/18 edition of the NYTimes

“Unsheltered,” an investigative series published this week in The New York Times, looks at the city’s affordable housing crisis and how the system created to protect tenants broke down.

“The Vanishing Affordable Apartment” explores how landlords have exploited loopholes and a lack of accountability in the overburdened housing system to force out rent-regulated residents. [Read it here.]

“The Eviction Machine” shows how housing court, intended to protect tenants from dangerous conditions, has been turned into a weapon to push them out. [Read it here.]

The third installment, “69,000 Housing Crises,” offers an inside look at the chaos of housing court, the last stop on the road to eviction. [Read it here.]

There are several legislative proposals afoot — some predating the investigation, and some in response to it — to address these problems.

Here are a few:

In response to the investigation, the Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. of the Bronx wrote a letter to Mayor Bill de Blasio urging him to move more quickly to put into effect a “right to counsel” law that was passed in 2017 but has a rollout deadline of 2022. The law would guarantee legal representation for vulnerable tenants facing eviction and the housing court system.

Also in response, State Senator Brad Hoylman, Democrat of Manhattan, introduced legislation cracking down on abuses by property owners and landlords this week. It would require the Department of Buildings to review landlords’ applications for renovations to ensure accuracy — verifying, specifically, that no tenants were living in units up for renovation.

Other bills proposed this month would require landlords who have forced rent-regulated tenants from their apartments to revert the same number of units back to rent-regulated status, and to make it a felony to submit a building application falsely claiming that no tenants are living in a property.

The attorney general’s office proposed a bill in 2017 to address the general inability to bring criminal tenant harassment charges under New York law.

Kim Barker, the Times reporter leading the investigation, said, “The real changes that are needed have to happen at the state level.” She added: “The housing laws are coming up for reauthorization next year, so that’s when you’re going to see this debate really heat up again.”

Here’s what else is happening: