



**THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF COUNCIL MEMBER DAN GARODNICK**

250 BROADWAY  
NEW YORK, NY 10007  
(212) 788-7393

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Contact: Dan Pasquini - (212) 788-7393, (347) 263-3806

## **Garodnick, Mendez, Elected Officials, Tenant Advocates March to Rent Board Hearings and Call for Fairness**

Council Members Dan Garodnick and Rosie Mendez, along with elected officials and East Side housing advocates, marched Monday from 14th Street and First Avenue to the meeting of the Rent Guidelines Board at Cooper Union and rallied for fair rents.

“In a year when vacancy levels in Manhattan are again below 1 percent, and when vacancy levels citywide remain at emergency levels, this is not the time for tenants to be hammered with steep rent increases,” **said Council Member Garodnick**. “Tenants have a very clear case for why they should be spared huge rent hikes, and we will make that case publicly.”

**Council Member Mendez said**, “The character of our city is at stake. Unless we have strong rent laws that keep moderate and low income people living in our city, we will lose much of what makes New York great.”

She added: “Particularly in Manhattan where market pressures are the most intense, landlords who have fared better than tenants during the recession, must be ready to accept only modest increases in rent.”

The march formed at the northeast corner of 14th Street and First Avenue before heading to the hearing, at Cooper Union. The march and rally were co-sponsored by State Senators Tom Duane, Liz Krueger and Dan Squadron; Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and Assembly Members Brian Kavanagh and Deborah Glick; Community Boards 3 and 6; and the STPCV Tenants Association, Tenants & Neighbors, CAAV Organizing Asian Communities, the Cooper Square Committee, Good Old Lower East Side and the Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness and Housing.

“Given the continuing toll the recent economic recession has taken on average New Yorkers and the steady rent increases the RGB has annually approved, I am dismayed that the RGB is even considering rent increases of 3% - 5.75% for one year lease renewals and 6% - 9% for two year lease renewals,” **said State Senator Duane**. “It behooves the RGB to reject rent increases in any amount, as they would serve only to continue to over-enhance landlord profits and to further destabilize New York City’s affordable housing stock.”

“This battle has to be fought on two fronts. We must extend and strengthen the rent laws in Albany and prevent the landlords and their allies from undoing recent tenant victories like the *Roberts* decision, and we must also persuade the Rent Guidelines Board not to impose additional hardship on tenants,”

**said Assembly Member Brian Kavanagh**, a member of the Assembly Housing Committee who represents Stuyvesant Town, Peter Cooper Village, and the Lower East Side. “On both fronts, we're up against landlords whose wealth and campaign contributions buy undue influence, but with many of us coming together to fight back at the city and state level, I'm confident we'll succeed in preserving affordable, stable communities.”

“With living expenses outpacing income, many Stuy Town and Peter Cooper residents will have trouble absorbing another increase, let alone the excessive ranges that have been proposed,” **said Al Doyle, president of the STPCV Tenants Association**. “I have yet to speak to a single resident who has had a salary increase lately equal to the 3 percent lowest increase, let alone the 9 percent highest. I urge all of our neighbors to turn out and show the members of this Board what real people look like.”

“Our research two years ago found that 24 percent of Lower East Side residents pay more than 50% of their income towards rent. Many low income rent stabilized tenants are at high risk for displacement because of their heavy rent burden. And when they move out, their apartments become deregulated. Our community has lost over 10,000 rent stabilized apartments over the past 15 years. The RGB needs to stop aiding and abetting this process of deregulation with hefty rent increases,” **said Steve Herrick, Executive Director of the Cooper Square Committee**.

“The Rent Guidelines Board’s preliminary increases of 3 to 5.75 percent for a one year lease and 6 to 9 percent for two year leases are excessively high for a recessionary economy. Tenants have to fight hard to keep this year's rent increases to a minimum,” **said Wasim Lone, Director of Housing Services for Good Old Lower East Side**.

The Rent Guidelines Board, the agency that sets the legal allowable rent increases for stabilized apartments, has proposed increases of 3 to 5.75 percent for a one-year lease, and 6 to 9 percent for a two-year lease – and a 1 percent surcharge for buildings with oil heat.

Those proposed increases are substantially higher than the ones approved in 2010, of 2.25 percent and 4.5 percent for one- and two-year leases, respectively.

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