



THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
NEW YORK, NY 10007

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** September 3, 2015  
**CONTACT:** [pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov](mailto:pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov), (212) 788-2958

**MAYOR DE BLASIO SIGNS THREE NEW LAWS PROTECTING TENANTS FROM HARASSMENT**

*New laws outlaw aggressive buy-out offers used to force tenants out of rent-regulated apartments*

**NEW YORK**—Mayor Bill de Blasio today signed into law three new measures to protect tenants from harassment, outlawing aggressive ‘buy-out’ practices used to force tenants out of rent-regulated apartments. In fast-gentrifying neighborhoods, owners have used unscrupulous tactics to pressure tenants out of affordable apartments so they can reap rent increases from the turnover: making threats, harassing tenants at their workplace or at late hours of the night, hiring ‘Tenant Relocators’ to intimidate tenants into taking a buyout offer they’ve already refused.

The new laws prohibit these tactics and put in place new protections.

- Intro. 757-A, sponsored by Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, makes it unlawful for an owner to make a buyout offer within 180 days of a tenant explicitly refusing one.
- Intro. 682-A, sponsored by Council Member Dan Garodnick, makes it unlawful for an owner, in connection with a buyout offer, to threaten a tenant, to contact tenants at odd hours, or to provide false information to a tenant.
- Intro. 700-A, sponsored by Council Member Jumaane Williams, makes it unlawful for an owner to make a buyout offer without informing tenants of their right to stay in their apartment, to seek an attorney’s advice, and to decline any future contact on a buyout offer for 180 days.

“We won’t let tenants be intimidated and forced out of their homes. These new laws protect tenants from harassment and aggressive buyout schemes, and simultaneously help the City keep neighborhoods affordable. We have a strong partnership with the City Council standing up for tenants, and we thank the sponsors of these laws for helping combat these unscrupulous practices,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**.

“These new laws will protect tenants and keep the process of buyout offers by landlords fair and honest,” said **Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito**. “New Yorkers living in rent-regulated housing have the right to stay in their homes if they wish, and should never feel pressured, intimidated or coerced into accepting offers they don’t want to take. With today’s bill signings, New York City is ensuring that tenants are protected from harassment and coercion. I thank

Council Member Garodnick, Housing and Buildings Chair Jumaane Williams, and the de Blasio administration for their partnership and staunch commitment to protecting our city's tenants."

"Our city cannot stand by while tenants are being harassed out of their homes. There are too many unscrupulous owners of rent stabilized buildings who will do anything to have a tenant vacate their apartment, including hiring a tenant relocater to get the job done. Tenants don't deserve to be intimidated out of their homes, and should be informed of their rights to refuse buyout offers. I am proud to sponsor this legislation which will combat such egregious tenant harassment behavior, and thank Mayor de Blasio, Speaker Mark-Viverito and my Council colleagues for pushing these important reforms," said **Council Member Jumaane D. Williams, Chair of the Committee on Housing and Buildings.**

"People deserve to be able to stay in their homes, free from harassment," said **Council Member Dan Garodnick.** "These bills will protect tenants from owners who cross the line in their efforts induce tenants to vacate their units."

"We cannot allow tenant relocators that use dishonest methods to get tenants out of their apartments to continue that practice. As the representative of Bushwick, where we are seeing hundreds of tenants lured and bullied to accept ridiculous buyout offers, I know firsthand the negative impact that it has on families and vulnerable individuals that are trying to hold on to the limited affordable housing stock in our community. It is apparent that something needs to be done and I look forward to working with Speaker Mark-Viverito, Chair Williams and Council Member Garodnick to ensure that these landlords, and the tenant relocators they employ, do not continue to take advantage of decent, hard-working New Yorkers," stated **Council Member Rafael Espinal, Chair of the Committee on Consumer Affairs.**

The penalty for violating the new laws ranges from \$1,000 to \$10,000 for a first offense, to \$2,000 to \$10,000 for subsequent offenses. Fighting displacement is a major priority for the de Blasio administration. The City has:

- Increased funding for free, anti-eviction legal services to tenants eight-fold, to more than \$50 million.
- Implemented the first-ever rent freeze in the history of the Rent Guidelines Board
- Formed the Tenant Support Unit to door-knock tenants in at-risk buildings in neighborhoods across the city to inform tenants of their rights, address housing code violations, and connect tenants with free legal services.
- Created a new Office of Civil Justice, in partnership with the City Council, to coordinate and recommend strategies to provide free and low-cost legal services to New Yorkers in need.
- Created a Tenant Harassment Prevention Task Force with the Attorney General and State to lay criminal charges against landlords who render buildings unsafe or unlivable to force tenants out of rent stabilized housing.
- Locked in affordable rents for decades to come at 18,095 apartments, keeping families in their homes.

"Our City's rent-regulated housing stock is under siege by unscrupulous landlords, who all too often harass their tenants to leave their apartments in neighborhoods like Bushwick and Jackson Heights. We applaud Mayor de Blasio, Speaker Mark-Viverito, and the Council for taking these

strong measures to protect tenants from the aggressive buy-out practices, harassment, and threats that we hear about every day in our neighborhoods,” said **Javier Valdés, co-Executive Director of Make the Road New York.**

“With tenant harassment at an all-time high due to weak rent laws, The Legal Aid Society commends the leadership of Mayor de Blasio and Speaker Mark-Viverito in addressing this important issue. Sadly there is much work to do to ensure that landlords are not pushing long term tenants out of their homes and communities. The Society looks forward to working with the New York City Council and the Mayor to protect tenants from wrongful evictions by unscrupulous landlords,” said **Judith Goldiner, Attorney-in-Charge of the Civil Law Reform Unit at The Legal Aid Society.**

“Weak rent laws have led to a harassment and affordability crisis for rent regulated tenants in New York. These new laws are key to challenge harassment tactics by unscrupulous landlords. I commend Mayor Bill de Blasio, Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, Council Member Jumaane Williams, and Council Member Dan Garodnick for advocating, passing, and signing into law legislation to address the harassment and affordability crisis for rent regulated tenants,” said **Katie Goldstein, Executive Director of Tenants & Neighbors.**

“Every day we see the harmful effects of harassment on New York City tenants,” said **Natasia de Silva, staff attorney with Legal Services NYC-Bronx.** “These bills strengthen tenant protections by ensuring that tenants are aware of their rights to live free of such intimidation.”

“Unfortunately, the balance of power between landlords and tenants often weighs on the side of the landlords. Today, we are pleased to see Mayor Bill de Blasio sign into law three bills that protect tenants, create more restrictions to curb harassment and standardize rules for buyout offers,” said **Kamilla Sjödin, Associate Director for Housing Law at the New York Legal Assistance Group.** “We thank Mayor de Blasio, Speaker Mark-Viverito, and the New York City Council for their commitment to addressing the critical issue of tenant harassment and ensuring that tenants are protected against illegal tactics used by some unscrupulous landlords.”

“We’ve seen a real rise in landlords stalking, threatening, and badgering tenants with unwanted buyout demands,” said **Scott Stamper, Supervising Attorney at MFY Legal Services,** which represents low-income tenants throughout the city. “This isn’t negotiation, it’s harassment. As with anyone else, when a tenant says no it means no, and we commend the Mayor and the Council for giving tenants another tool to stand up for themselves.”

Learn more at [nyc.gov/housing](https://nyc.gov/housing).

###