STRONGER RENT REGULATIONS WILL BENEFIT EVERY RENTER IN PWV
JOIN THE FIGHT TO PRESERVE AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND INCREASE OUR RIGHTS

Decisions on rent regulations by our legislators and governor in Albany that will affect all our rental apartments, both rent-stabilized and market-rate, will be coming up shortly. The Albany vote will determine how many apartments can stay rent stabilized and how many market rate apartments, many of them wrongly deregulated, might be returned to rent stabilization. We need to make our voices heard to preserve affordable housing and our homes.

Background History:
Park West Village (PWV) was created in the late 1950’s and early 1960’s as part of a government-subsidized urban redevelopment of the area from 97th to 100th Streets between Central Park West and Amsterdam Avenue. PWV, with seven buildings and 2500 apartments, was intended for moderate-income renters. All the apartments—1,650 apartments in four buildings on Central Park West and 900 in three buildings on Columbus Avenue—were rent-stabilized.

The buildings at 372 and 382 Central Park West were converted to condominiums in 1987. The buildings at 392 and 400 Central Park West were converted to condominiums in 1992. Since conversion, almost 90 percent of the apartments have been sold to owners who either re-rent the apartments at market rates or live in them for a while before reselling them at a profit to someone else. The only rent-stabilized Central Park West apartments today are apartments that are still occupied by the tenants who lived there at the time of the conversion.

Rent stabilization, at 784, 788, and 792 Columbus Avenue and in the entire metropolitan area, was severely undermined, in 1994, by a new law providing for vacancy decontrol of the rent for an apartment. Under vacancy decontrol, the threshold rent to deregulate an apartment was initially $2,000 per month. As a result of high-rent vacancy decontrol nearly half of the rent stabilized apartments in the Columbus Avenue buildings have been converted to market rate.

The rent regulation laws must be renewed this Spring. These laws must be strengthened and loopholes in them closed. Now is the time for tenants to lobby our legislators. Landlords have money to buy legislators. But tenants have numbers and can vote to throw them out of office. The PWVTA Board supports The Upstate Downstate Housing Alliance, which is a statewide coalition of dozens of community and tenant advocacy organizations, including the Real Rent Reform Coalition and Met Council on Housing, Tenants and Neighbors, and Tenants Pac. The alliance’s slogan is HOUSING JUSTICE FOR ALL! The legislative reforms needed to achieve Housing Justice are outlined next.
LAWS MUST PROTECT ALL RENTERS, LIMIT RENT INCREASES AND END VACANCY DECONTROL

END VACANCY DECONTROL
Landlords currently get a rent bonus of 20 percent when an apartment is vacated and rented to a new tenant. The vacancy bonus is an incentive for landlords to harass and evict long-term rent-stabilized tenants and, through repeated apartment turnovers and vacancy bonuses, take thousands of apartments out of rent regulation. In low-income neighborhoods that can attract new wealthier tenants, vacancy decontrol is an incentive for landlords to harass tenants with “preferential rents,” rents lower than the legal maximum, only to raise their rents by huge amounts when the leases are renewed. Legislation has been introduced to repeal vacancy decontrol and to re-regulate all apartments lost to deregulation.

LIMIT OR END CHARGES FOR BUILDING AND APARTMENT IMPROVEMENTS
Currently landlords of rent-regulated apartments can add costs claimed for a major capital improvement (MCI) in a building, such as a new roof, boiler, or elevator, to the base rent of every regulated tenant. They can also increase the rent of an empty apartment based on any individual apartment improvement (IAI), such as new floors, cabinets, and appliances. Many costs are inflated and unproven or even not allowed—for example, replacing undamaged floors and cabinets installed the previous year and again adding the cost to the base rent of new tenants. Additions for improvements, along with vacancy decontrol after an apartment has reached the rent regulation threshold and a new tenant moves in, have allowed landlords to deregulate thousands of apartments. Legislation has been introduced to either abolish the improvement bonus or remove it from the base rent and end it when the cost has been recovered.

RESTORE RENT AND EVICTION PROTECTIONS FOR TENANTS OF DEREGULATED APARTMENTS
Currently, tenants of apartments not subject to rent regulation (market rate tenants) can be denied a renewal lease and evicted for no reason. Rent increases are not limited. Legislation has been introduced to allow eviction only for a good cause and to give every renter the right to a renewal lease and to a rent change limited by a local price index.

MAKE PREFERENTIAL RENTS THE BASE RENT
Currently, rent-stabilized tenants whose leases show a “preferential rent,” a rent that is lower than the legal maximum, can, when the lease is being renewed, see the base rent for any allowable increase raised suddenly by hundreds of dollars. Some 266,000 households, mostly in low-income neighborhoods in the city’s outer boroughs, have preferential rents. To prevent massive displacement of low-income renters, as wealthier renters arrive, this loophole must be closed. Legislation has been introduced to mandate that when landlords renew rent-stabilized leases any allowable rent increases must be based on the existing rent.

REDUCE RENT CONTROL RENT INCREASES
Long-time older tenants of apartments still under rent control have been burdened by huge rent increases, up to 7.5 percent every year. Legislation has been introduced to require increases for rent-controlled tenants no higher than those for rent-stabilized tenants, as set by the Rent Guidelines Board.
EXTEND RIGHTS TO ALL RENTERS IN NEW YORK
Currently only New York City and municipalities in Nassau, Westchester and Rockland counties can opt into renters’ rights. This geographic restriction must be abolished, so that renters across the state can bring tenant protections to their communities.

A PWVTA Member Becomes a Housing Lobbyist for a Day
By Maxine Borowitz

On a cold, rainy February 12, 2019 morning, Patricia Loftman, PWVTA President and I met at 6:15 AM in our 788 Columbus Avenue lobby to walk to Broadway to board a bus to Albany. On the bus, we met other enthusiastic affordable housing advocates ready to take on the legislators in Albany. We were a part of HOUSING JUSTICE FOR ALL: 2019, a coalition of statewide housing advocates. This was a large event attended by citizens throughout New York State. It was impressively organized and exciting to attend. Park West Village tenants, like all tenants, need fair housing. Pat and I went to Albany to represent PWVTA and to bring information back about the importance of standing up for our rights as renters. When we arrived, we attended an information session that outlined our schedule. Our mission was to speak with legislators to advocate for specific tenant protection bills. We were divided into teams with an experienced team leader. Afterwards we attended a rally to stop homelessness. Did you know that only 2 percent of people in shelters ever find homes outside of homeless shelters?

My team then went to the offices of Bronx state representatives Jose Rivera and Luis Sepulveda. Both were in a legislative session. However, their legislative aides were welcoming, listened to us and took notes. During our sojourn, we encountered Brian Benjamin, our state senator, whom I knew to be a friend of both the PWVTA as well as the Working Group and community residents and parents fighting to prevent Jewish Home Lifecare from building its new nursing home on PWV’s 97th Street parking lot next to PS 163. We had a conversation with him about various tenant bills. I was happy to meet him. Afterwards, we used our vouchers for a delicious low-cost lunch. Then back to the bus to come home.

This was my first trip to Albany to advocate for tenants’ rights and it won’t be my last. I felt very effective knowing that I could help to make a difference.

JOIN US TO SAVE OUR HOMES. WIN STRONGER RENT PROTECTIONS.
RALLY IN ALBANY. MAY 14, 2019
For More Information: president@pwvta.org
PWVTA HIGHLIGHTED AT RIGHT TO COUNSEL VICTORY CELEBRATION

PWVTA was acknowledged at The Right to Counsel (RTC) Victory Celebration on January 31, 2019. RTC guarantees a lawyer for any tenant facing eviction. Evictions in zip codes with RTC representation has significantly decreased compared to zip codes without RTC. The story of a PWV tenant, facing eviction, who successfully used the legal services of Right To Counsel, was profiled at the celebration.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF EFFORTS TO KEEP RENTS AFFORDABLE

New York City’s need for affordable housing has been widely recognized for at least 125 years. Laws and regulations to control rents in the City were enacted in the early 1900's and except for a few short intervals, most notably the Great Depression from 1929 to World War II, they have survived in some form up to the present.

For the past 50 years the city’s rental apartments have been protected, albeit in diminishing numbers, by rent regulations. Rent Control started in 1943 and initially regulated rent increases in all existing buildings. Rent Stabilization, which took effect in 1969, limited rent increases in most buildings built after the end of World War II. Under the law, rented-controlled apartments that were vacated and re-rented passed into rent stabilization. Some two million rental homes in the city were initially protected. But landlord lobbying and donations quickly persuaded legislators to weaken tenant protections. Today fewer than one million homes are protected, of which some 40,000 are subject to rent control regulations. About 900,000 homes are protected by the rent stabilization law, under which rent increases for new and renewal leases are set by the city’s Rent Guidelines Board.

In 1971 New York State enacted the Urstadt Law, which allows only state legislators to strengthen tenant protections in New York City. The city remained free to weaken protections. City legislators passed and Mayor Giuliani signed a bill, in 1994, allowing for vacancy decontrol of rents that reached $2,000. In 1997 state legislators passed and governor Pataki signed a state-wide vacancy decontrol bill. Vacancy decontrol, together with permanent rent-increase bonuses for building and apartment improvements allowed by the state Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR), have enabled landlords to deregulate rents for one million apartments, so far.

2019 MEMBERSHIP COUPON TO YOUR PWVTA BUILDING REP [who: info@PWVTA.org] OR mail to: Park West Village Tenants’ Association, P.O. Box 20339, Park West Finance Station, New York, NY 10025-0339PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY!
Name _______________________________ Building___________ Apt______
Phone_________________ Email ___________________ □ Check for 2019 membership dues enclosed payable to PWVTA □ $75 □ Other* $_______ □ Condo Owner: Check for 2019 Associate Membership dues enclosed, payable to PWVTA □ $35 □ Check includes additional contribution to the PWVTA Legal Fund Amount $__________ Your status: □ Rent-Stabilized Tenant □ Market-Rate Tenant □ Condo Owner * If you cannot make the full $75 payment of your annual dues, please just pay what you can. □ I want to be more involved. Here are my special interests: __________________