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Joan Shannon
City of Burlington
City Council Charter Change Committee Chair

Ms. Shannon,

I have been following the ongoing debate between the Burlington Tenants Union, The Vermont Landlords Association, Landlords and Tenants surrounding the demands of the Burlington Tenants Union (BTU). I sent the attached letter back in February following the BTU's letter of demands. While some of their ideas are in fact productive to discuss, others are an attack on the rights of landowners and Landlords in the City.

The removal of "no-cause evictions" and associated rent control are demands that cannot, under any circumstance, be allowed to be pass. I have grave concerns what this would mean for Landlords in the Queen City. The only items as restrictive and damaging to Landlords is not allowing to adequately review credit and rental history. I fear these rights of Landlords will be in peril next.

The notion that a measure should be put forth to the voters of Burlington devoid of actual numbers in regard to maximum rental increases is absurd. It shows a complete lack of understanding of the economics of being a Landlord. Will the City put a maximum allowable increase in property taxes commensurate with a potential rental amount increase? Will our utilities, insurance providers, contractors, trash removal companies and the like do the same? I don't believe they will.

I feel as though those who are trying to pass this believe it is the way to solve the housing issue. It will actually have the exact opposite effect. Some years back, the State imposed rental increase restrictions on Mobile Home Parks. On paper, a strong protection. Since then, essentially no new Mobile Home Parks have opened in the State.

Where is the incentive for a developer to build new units if they will be restricted in what they can charge?

We are barking up the wrong tree here. We need to look for ways to incentivize Landlords and developers to keep rents low enough to fit within the bounds of the average income. Carrot VS stick....

The issue at hand is LIVABLE WAGE and not rents.

There are plenty of other examples, specific to the no cause removal, of how this would hurt Landlords. Trying to sell a property, trying to renovate a property, or making other substantial repairs made difficult (if not impossible) while occupied. Or perhaps a mom and pop Landlord who signed a lease with a tenant only to find they did not include lease terms (as allowed by law) that would be a substantial violation of the lease. Sometimes, Tenants just don't work out regardless if they obeyed the lease.

Our rights as Landowners are under attack. For those of us who do (and we are the majority despite the rhetoric to the contrary) take pride in our product and treat our Tenants with respect, we are being punished for something we have not created.

It is a very slippery slope to continue to erode the rights of private landowners.

Unfortunately, this will also have a disproportionately adverse effect on small “mom and pops”.

James Unsworth