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Tenant-Backed Bills Stall in Albany

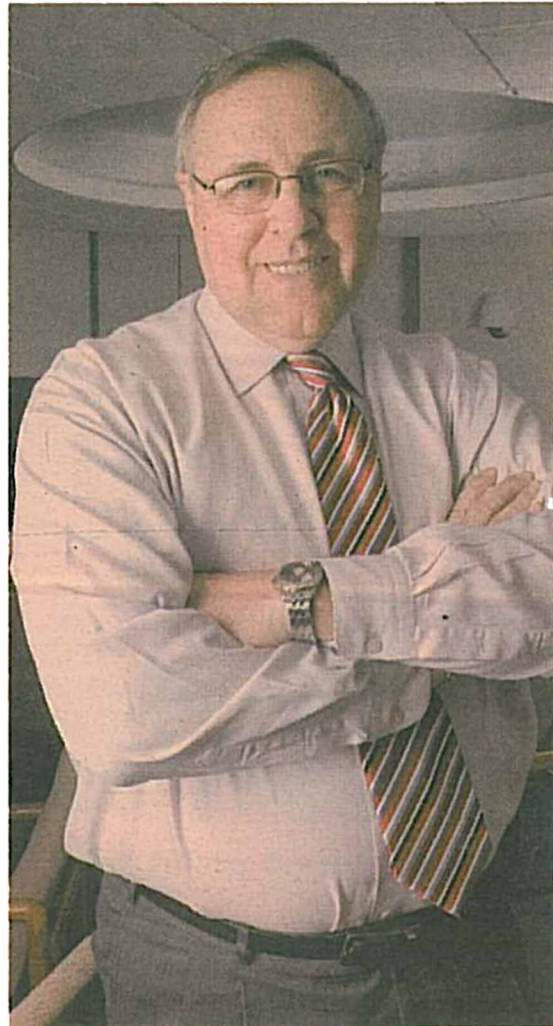
When Democrats won control of the State Senate from Republicans in November 2008, the common sentiment was that New York City landlords were going to be in trouble. With Democrats controlling both houses of the Legislature and the governor's mansion, tenant activists hoped to be able to pass a raft of new legislation that would add new protections for renters and restrict revenue for landlords.

But as the second legislative session under a Democratic Senate ended last week, no major tenant-backed bill had passed.

Within the Senate, there had been discussions over a package of bills that would have included many tenant-friendly provisions—including a bill that would return market-rate units in Mitchell Lama buildings to rent stabilization and a bill that would extend rent regulations by seven years—along with a renewal of the landlord-friendly 421-a tax break. The two were paired with the intent of giving the landlords reason not to oppose the tenant bills.

Many landlords opposed it. "As a package, it was problematic to some people," Steven Spinola (pictured), president of the Real Estate Board of New York, said. "We've been told, for the moment, that none of this is going."

Senate Democrats such as Liz Krueger pushed hard for the tenant package, although landlords showed strong resistance, particularly on the Mitchell Lama bill. (Noticeably absent from the bill package were any major changes to rent stabilization and rent control;



tenant activists accepted that there was not enough support in the Senate to pass anything big, so they apparently have turned their efforts on this issue to the future.)

Though the package did not pass this session, parts could still make it through in 2010. The existing 421-a legislation expires at the end of the year, and tenant advocates in the Senate will presumably block its passage without some of the other tenant-backed bills.
—Eliot Brown