

## DECENT, AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR ALL NEW YORKERS

### Empire State Economic Security Campaign

#### The Problem

During hard economic times the focus of elected officials often turns to, admittedly important, social issues such as job creation and cost savings through budget cuts. Housing, however, is often overlooked as a priority, especially for low income communities. We do this at the increased peril of those communities already ravaged by unemployment and cuts to vital services. Without stable, safe and affordable housing, families cannot focus on education, re-training, job search, employment retention, or raising their children. All else suffers without a place to call home.

Yet housing for low-income New Yorkers is increasingly unsafe, unaffordable or simply unavailable. We see this from Buffalo to New York City where thousands of housing violations leave low-income families living in unsafe conditions and where affordable apartments are becoming increasingly scarce. In New York City and its surrounding communities more than 1 million low-income people live in rent regulated housing (Community Service Society, *Destabilize Rent: the Impact of Vacancy Decontrol on Low Income Communities 2009*). Yet, since the enactment of vacancy decontrol, over 300,000 rent regulated units have been lost. This represents the loss of vital housing resources that cannot be made up with new construction or through subsidies. Other types of affordable housing are also at risk; over 45% of Mitchell Lama units have been lost over the last ten years leaving fewer than 35,000 units available to a population that has historically been teachers and civil servants and the backbone of their communities. (*Real Rent Reform Campaign 2011*).

#### What the Public Thinks

Most people, regardless of income, think that affordable housing is an important issue. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition over 50% of respondents support government policies to fund low-income housing and over 75% of those “consistently support” programs to create housing even if tax increases are needed and support a housing candidate over a tax cut candidate.

#### The 2011-2012 Session

We urge you to:

- **Renew and Strengthen Expiring Rent Regulation Laws.** Units covered under rent regulation disproportionately house low-income families; 60% of low-income NYC residents live in rent regulated units. If rent regulation laws are not renewed this year this entire housing stock will be lost leaving over one million families unable to afford their homes.
- **Protect Mitchell Lama and Project-Based Section 8 Tenants** – more than half of the 80,000 Mitchell Lama units have been taken out of the program, these units should be protected under rent stabilization laws since the majority of residents are low or moderate income.
- **End Vacancy Decontrol and Re-regulate the Apartments Lost to Destabilization** – New York cannot not afford to lose even one more unit of affordable housing. The median household income of a family in rent regulated housing is \$38,000 a year. That means that this family can afford a monthly rent of \$900 (*CSS Study: Destabilize Rent: the Impact of Vacancy Decontrol on Low Income Communities 2009*) - much lower than current fair market rents in NYC and the surrounding municipalities.
- **Oppose reducing the current formula-based funding for Neighborhood and Rural Preservation** – The Governor's budget proposes to cut the program by 50% and convert the contract to a performance based funding program. Neighborhood and Rural Preservation Programs provide vital services statewide ranging from housing development and rehabilitation to homebuyer counseling.

**NEW YORK MUST DO MORE TO SUPPORT FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS HOMES!!**