



## **Literally, 'Affordable Housing Disappears.'**

June 17, 2009

Op Ed by David R. Jones

President and CEO of the Community Service Society

Rent-regulated housing is the single most important component of New York City's housing stock for low-wage workers. More Latino New Yorkers - over 325,000 families - live in rent-regulated households than in any other type of housing.

New research from the Community Service Society (CSS) reveals that a controversial provision allowing the deregulation of rent-regulated apartments is having a strong detrimental effect on low-income tenants and neighborhoods.

The provision, known as vacancy decontrol, allows for the deregulation of apartments when their legal rents reach \$2,000 a month during a vacancy. At the time that the provision was passed, its proponents argued that it would only affect high-rent areas of Manhattan below Harlem, but the CSS study shows that is also affecting neighborhoods in Upper Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens, areas where many Latino New Yorkers live.

Vacancy decontrol is part of the reason why so many low-wage working households, especially people of color, are being pushed out of their neighborhoods all across the city. Rents for recent movers rose by 51 percent over the six-year period in Upper Manhattan and by 39 percent in inner Queens and Brooklyn, compared to only 29 percent for Manhattan below Harlem.

City residents are facing increasing hardships as the economy worsens. Affordable housing is disappearing at an alarming rate. Instead of the circus that is going on in Albany right now, our representatives ought to be revising the laws on vacancy decontrol and providing a tax refund for the state's renters just as they did for homeowners.