

With Regrets—

Jackson Resigns Rent Board

Dear Governor Hammond:

I regret that I must submit my resignation from the Anchorage Emergency Rent Review Board. The time spent on the board activities was taking a considerable amount of time away from my activities as executive vice-president, Alaska Federation of Natives, Inc. on our many priority issues such as education, justice, energy, and work on solutions to other recurring problems such as fisheries disaster throughout Alaska.

In all resignations I attempt to leave suggestions which I feel would help make the program more effective and responsive to the people affected. I am hopeful your administration will accept the suggestions as valid and hopefully address them in the near future. Much of it was identified while sitting on the Rent Review Board the past several months and meeting with public interest groups throughout Anchorage.

First of all, the Rent Review regulations. I have real problems with anyone, no matter who the administration is, who declares an emergency and takes almost three months to draft and certify regulations. I suspect the delay may be due to the Malpractice Task Force activities, however, with winter upon us and an eviction with very little places to rent for the tenant, I would think this would have been an additional priority item for the Department of Commerce and Economic Development.

Still on regulations, which I finally received a copy and had some time to briefly review. My general reaction to those new regulations is that they appear to be the product of a compromise

which attempts to satisfy two opposing constituencies (i.e. the landlords and tenants). Compromise is an excellent political tool in many ambiguous circumstances, but it is not the way to deal with an emergency situation. The housing emergency impacts upon an identifiable group within the greater population i.e. those who rent or buy housing—and even more importantly on those who can't afford to rent for very much. There is little need to protect landlords under these circumstances. Therefore there is little need to compromise protection of the tenant in favor of the landlord. Compromise may be a politician's instinctive response to any "political" situation, but in an emergency situation it is likely to create more confusion than resolution of the very real social problems which people who are suddenly without housing face.

Secondly, adequate funding of the Emergency Rent Review Office is a must! I feel very strongly that your office should take advantage of this emergency situation by funding additional people research and gather statistics such as what are the weaknesses of the Emergency Rent Review Law, Landlord-Tenant Law and propose some legislative solutions to those weaknesses based upon your findings. This would alleviate a considerable amount of possible criticism in the future should additional housing emergencies be created due to the Trans-Alaska Gas Pipeline or Outer Continental Shelf activity. Adequate funding for public relations is also a strong consideration. I am of the

opinion that problems always start when communications break down or are very weak. In this case, very little information flowed from our offices in the form of what are our duties, responsibilities, times of meeting and so on resulting in the public speculating the status of those items. The funding I recognize is a problem particularly with the economic status of our state, however, with the Emergency Rent Review Board providing a service to the Anchorage area, all the funds need not be merely state-supported.

Thirdly, I believe the Emergency Rent Review Board has worked to a certain extent despite the criticism. The two other people on the board, although our philosophies differ, are dedicated public servants and should be identified as such. However, in the hearings I find everything is rising—groceries, energy, interest rates, utility rates, housing, and the list could go on and on. In the rest of the nation, inflation has subsided, however, here in Alaska it is still on a double-digit scale and rising. We may be holding down the rise in rents but who is addressing the other significant increases? Somehow, someone should address this situation before everyone and everything is priced out of the market.

Other items I addressed before include notarized analysis forms and a moratorium on increases in apartments simply because there is a new landlord. I am of the opinion a moratorium is needed during an emergency simply to provide time to determine the actual costs, not merely an anticipated cost. The notarized forms would insure that information is true and is a legal document. These two items I understand are not in the new regulations.

I appreciate the opportunity to serve and your confidence in me. I enjoyed the work and responsibility to provide a much-needed service to the Anchorage area.

My resignation will become effective as soon as your appointment of my replacement is final. To replace me, I would strongly recommend the appointment of Phil Smith. Phil is the current director, Rural Alaska Community Action Program and has expressed some strong interest in the appointment. I believe he will do an excellent job as a member of the Anchorage Emergency Rent Review Board. y best wishes and warm regards.

Sincerely,

Gordon Jackson

cc: George Sullivan Mayor
Tony Motley, Commissioner,
Dept. of Commerce and
Economic Development
Frank Danner, chairman,
Anchorage Rent Review Board
Bonnie Smith