

President's Message



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Traditionally, April is Fair Housing Month and remains so for tenants but there is nothing fair about how owners are being treated by the local government.

On February 26, 2026, the rent increase moratorium ordinance aka "rent freeze" went into effect for multi-family, residential rental units in Santa Barbara having received their certificate of occupancy on or before February 1, 1995, in other words, all aging housing stock that needs the most maintenance and upkeep.

This ordinance is set to expire upon the establishment of a Rent Stabilization Board or on December 31, 2026. But, one of the (perhaps) unintended consequences brought up at the City Council hearing but remaining unanswered was what happens to those Leases that renew between February 26, 2026 and December 31, 2026. If the rents cannot be increased in those Leases, then the rent freeze will not end on December 31, 2026, but will continue potentially another year if the Lease is set to end in December of 2026 and must be renewed per the City's mandatory one-year Lease offer requirement.

At the same time, the second ordinance amending Santa Barbara Municipal Code section 26.50.100 adding requirements for just cause, no fault evictions for the purpose of permanently removing a rental unit from the market took effect. Those amendments specifically require that if one unit is removed from the rental market then all units in the building must be removed AND they must stay off the rental market for FIVE YEARS. This requirement runs with the land so that subsequent owners of the property must abide by it.

Imagine trying to sell a multi-family building that has to remain vacant for five years or some remnant thereof. The diminution in value is tremendous. And, how does it make sense to keep these units vacant rather than renting them to tenants? This is really a good example of the convoluted thinking of the City Council and another example of how they are REMOVING rental units from the market rather than adding them.

In response to these latest onslaughts to private property ownership, SBRPA took action.

On March 3, 2026, housing providers held a press conference on the steps of City Hall announcing that prominent local attorney/litigator and former

City Council for Santa Barbara, A. Barry Cappello has been hired to file a lawsuit challenging both ordinances on Constitutional grounds.

Specifically, these constitute illegal takings of private property that violate protections provided by the U.S. Constitution. More information will be provided as soon as the lawsuit is filed which is anticipated to be within one week from the writing of this message.

The day after this announcement, the entire sidewalk area in front of the SBRPA office was vandalized with graffiti showing the kind of tenants we are up against.

This time, the City Council has gone too far.

Since the enactment of the 2019 Tenant Protection Act and the subsequent local laws heaped on top of it, owners have been bombarded with regulation after regulation making the relationships between owners and renters unworkable. It has created a war zone whereas before there was peaceful negotiation.

The result is that studies have shown two out of every three smaller property owners owning 4 or fewer units will sell within the next two years.

Rental housing stock is dwindling in this City, not increasing.

Keep tuned for further developments.

At the State level, AB 1963 by McKinnor would mandate portable rental applications which means that a housing provider MUST accept portable screening reports prepared within 45 days by an approved tenant screening company and costing no more



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than \$45 for the applicant. The Bill would ban additional charges such as application or background check fees and housing providers must inform applicants of these rules in their advertisements.

AB 2616 again by McKinnor would mandate that dwelling units with Leases entered into on or after January 1, 2028, be capable of maintaining indoor temperatures below 82 degrees Fahrenheit through a combination of mechanical and nonmechanical methods by January 1, 2030.

SB 1155 by Smallwood-Cuevas would protect federal employees or contractors from eviction due to nonpayment of rent during a government shutdown, extending protections 30 days post-shutdown. It would prohibit housing providers from charging late fees and would require courts to pause eviction actions during the specified time. Tenants must provide documentation to housing providers or courts

SB 1160 by Durazo proposes that the Judicial Council collect and publicly share eviction data, reporting it to the Legislature. Additionally, courts must supply monthly information on unlawful detainer cases, aggregated by zip code, to be made available via a public records request.

Only two Bills are friendly to housing providers thus far: SB 1335 sponsored by CalRHA would provide a mechanism for property owners to deal

with personal property left in common areas by tenants. We are also working on getting the abandoned property law limit raised from \$700 before it can be deemed abandoned. It has been at \$700 since 2013. And, AB 1771 by Alvarez which would eliminate the need for an on-site manager for complexes comprising 16 or more units.

Please continue to monitor the SBRPA website for notifications about important City Council meetings where we need your help to tell your experiences.

We appreciate your membership and participation.

Betty L. Jeppesen, President