


NYC Tenants' Coronavirus Protections Upheld By Judge

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A federal judge dismissed a lawsuit filed by residential and commercial landlords that sought to overturn city laws protecting tenants.

NEW YORK CITY — A trio of laws designed to protect New York City tenants amid the coronavirus pandemic emerged unscathed from a lawsuit filed by landlords.

U.S. District Court Judge Ronnie Abrams dismissed the lawsuit in its entirety, effectively upholding laws that bar landlords from threatening or harassing residential and commercial renters.



The victory prompted a celebratory announcement by City Council Speaker Corey Johnson and an assortment of elected officials and business leaders.

"Restaurants and small businesses are the backbone of our economy, and they are struggling to keep afloat in this pandemic," Johnson said in a statement. "They should not have to worry about harassment or the loss of their homes because of the economic hardships this virus has caused their businesses. It's unfortunate that any landlord would try to fight our attempt to help small business owners, but we are thrilled that the court ruling allows us to continue to protect struggling New Yorkers during this difficult time."

City Council members passed the three bills — two against harassment of residential and commercial tenants, respectively, and one protecting some renters against enforcement of certain personal liability provisions in leases — as part of a coronavirus relief package in the spring.

But landlords filed a lawsuit claiming the bills, among other things, violated their constitutional rights.

Abrams, in his decision, acknowledged landlords have legitimate concerns, as do tenants, amid the pandemic. But he slapped down arguments that the harassment bills violate landlords' free speech rights.

"First, because the Court finds—as the City insists—that the Harassment Laws do not prevent landlords from making routine rent demands, these laws do not implicate Plaintiffs' free speech rights," Abrams wrote. "Moreover, because the Harassment Laws are sufficiently clear

on what constitutes harassment, the Court further concludes that these laws do not violate due process."