

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Joseph Strasburg

Looking over *RSA Reporter* articles from the past six months, I can see why a colleague recently asked me if I was OK. “You seem very negative about everything and that’s not like you.”

- *“Policymakers Remain in Defiant Denial of Mortgage Crisis.”*
- *“According to Housing Court Data, There is NO Eviction Crisis in NYC.”*
- *“Illegal Weed Stores - Ramifications for Owners.”*
- *“We’re Not Making This Up.”*
- *“Important Rent Registration Update: New Policies With Large Fines.”*

So it may be a surprise to hear that I’m not down, contrary to my concerned colleague’s editorial psychoanalysis. Quite the opposite. I’m upbeat that the clarity of bad news – economic data and hard facts and market information – is cutting through the usual noise of agenda driven rhetoric.

When NYU’s Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy issues a report coming to the same conclusions as an industry survey on the impacts of overregulation of stabilized buildings, that’s a good thing.

Reading Wall Street Journal, Barron’s and Investopedia reporting on the role of devalued apartment buildings in the collapse and shakiness of regional and community banks is encouraging - not because we celebrate bad news - but because it validates what the industry has long been predicting.

Coordinating a webinar with the Manhattan District Attorney’s office and the New York Office of Cannabis Management on the uncertainty of ground floor retail weed shops happened because we have been asking questions about what sort of liabilities buildings are facing in this new moment of legal marijuana.

Tenant Attorneys in private practice (not the lawyer-lobbyists at Legal Aid) agree with us that the glacial pace of cases being calendared and heard and resolved in Housing Court is also

bad for tenants. Housing Court data itself reveals the impact of delays on back rent accruals and what sort of cases are being filed and where. The information is always there to be collected and scrutinized, but it took the initiative of RSA’s General Counsel to pull the numbers into something readable and shareable. Coverage of that report is slowly shifting the conversation about Housing Court in a positive direction.

New regulations, burdensome and costly, have created a hardship for owners with potentially ruinous fines. This could have been a moment at which everyone threw their hands up and walked away. Instead, our diverse membership has been signing up for compliance workshops – 300 registrations for one such webinar in early March after just two days’ notice. RSA Counselors have been fielding calls nonstop, helping members navigate this new law. In this new difficulty we found solidarity.

Advocacy can be lonely and it’s always a grind. But in opposing reckless legislation being pushed by far-left and radical legislators, we have found a statewide coalition of owner groups supporting and enhancing each other’s efforts. Working together has made all the difference in how we approach policymakers and how policymakers consider what we say. Our coalition members don’t agree on every issue and recognize the importance of focusing on those we do.

Negativity gets ideas only so far. Negativity is only the first step in work that’s always more complicated and more involved than first impressions. History – recent and less recent – instructs that what happens at City Hall and in Albany is never just about one thing, but rather about crosscurrents of issues and personalities and agendas interacting with one another. Negativity doesn’t leave enough room to appreciate and understand the nuances of conversations – the difference between what’s being said and what’s being communicated.

There’s obviously a lot to be concerned about and a lot that needs to be paid careful attention to. But there’s also a lot to be hopeful about and those good things all start with our members. I’m grateful for that. ■

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