



The Fight for Rent Control in Sacramento Rages On

BY EDGAR SANCHEZ

Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg and Jovana Fajardo, a pro-tenant community organizer, agree: Crafting citywide rent control is not easy.

"If it were easy, it would have happened a long time ago," Steinberg said on August 13, when the City Council enacted the city's first rent control/tenant protection ordinance. Effective this week, the ordinance caps annual rent increases to between 7% and 9%, depending on the consumer price index (CPI).

"Definitely, creating rent control policy is not easy," Fajardo, Sacramento director of the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE), said during a later interview.

Despite agreeing on that, they differ on what constitutes good rent control — the reason Fajardo said she continues her quest to place a rent-control initiative on the city's 2020 ballot.

"This is an outstanding piece of work," Steinberg said of the city's rent-control ordinance, saluting council members Steve Hansen, Eric Guerra and Rick Jennings for producing "a reasonable anti-rent gauging piece and a real tenant protection."

The city's plan is retroactive to July 1. Among other things, it protects tenants who have lived in a rental unit at least a year from no-cause evictions.

Fajardo, however, contends that the city's plan doesn't protect "low-income families

of color that are going to be pushed out of their homes."

Rather than embrace "watered-down" rent control, Fajardo contends, the council should allow voters to decide what effective rent control should look like.

"CREATING RENT CONTROL POLICY IS NOT EASY."

Jovana Fajardo
Sacramento Director, Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE)

Last year, ACCE was in a coalition that collected over 44,000 voter signatures on petitions calling for a rent-control initiative. Among its features, it would tie annual rent increases to the CPI, with a minimum 2% increase and a 5% maximum. It also would establish an elected rental-housing board.

The initiative qualified, yet is not on the 2020 ballot.

Some of the partners of the city's plan—which include the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment, the Sacramento Housing Alliance and Organize Sacramento—are financially supported by The California Endowment to provide education about housing and transportation related issues. And while



ACCE's Jovana Fajardo (left) and Laura Jimenez (right) continue their quest to place a rent-control initiative on the 2020 Sacramento ballot after the City Council enacted its own rent control. Photo by Edgar Sanchez

The California Endowment does support these organizations, it does not fund or take positions on initiatives or legislative issues that require a vote of a public entity.

ACCE organizer Laura Jimenez, who attended that meeting, said that the council's decision will create more homelessness. And on August 13, Fajardo warned the council that, if necessary, ACCE will sue to add the initiative to the ballot.

"We're still fighting," Jimenez said. "We're not giving up!"

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