

Rent Controls and Affordable Housing

Imagine that the voters in your city are going to vote on a law that would roll back all rents on houses and apartments to the levels of two years ago and would freeze rents at those levels. At the many towns meetings held on this proposal, citizens have argued furiously. Among the you heard were:

“Rents are too high for people on fixed incomes like my husband and me. With prices going up and up, our pension and social security checks just aren’t enough. Everyone should have the right to decent housing. We have worked all our lives. Now all we ask is that rents be kept at an affordable level. That’s the fair thing to do.”

You also heard from the opposite side:

“Rent controls cause housing shortages. This lets rental property owners discriminate against any group they think is undesirable—families with children or pets, minorities, senior citizens. And the rest the owners get over a period of years won’t be enough to property maintain many older apartments. This will lead to blighted neighborhood. If access to housing is the problem, raising the income of poor people is the answer, not rent controls.”