



90 Pitkin Street
East Hartford, CT 06108
(860) 282-7899
(860) 282-7892 Fax
(800) 281-1481 (CT only)

Member Shelter Programs

The Umbrella
Ansonia, CT

The Center for Women & Families
Bridgeport, CT

Women's Center
Danbury, CT

United Services, Inc.
Domestic Violence Programs
Dayville, CT

Network Against Domestic Abuse
Enfield, CT

Greenwich YWCA
Domestic Abuse Service
Greenwich, CT

Interval House
Hartford, CT

Meriden-Wallingford Chrysalis
Meriden, CT

New Horizons
Middletown, CT

Prudence Crandall Center
New Britain, CT

Domestic Violence Services
New Haven, CT

Women's Center of SE CT
New London, CT

Domestic Violence Crisis Center
Norwalk, CT

Women's Support Services
Sharon, CT

Domestic Violence Crisis Center
Stamford, CT

Susan B. Anthony Project
Torrington, CT

Safe Haven
Waterbury, CT

United Services, Inc.
Domestic Violence Programs
Willimantic, CT

To: Members of the Judiciary Committee

From: Pamela Heller, Policy Intern, CCADV

Date: March 3, 2006

**Re: Raised Bill No. 361 – AN ACT CONCERNING
POSSESSIONS AND PERSONAL EFFECTS OF TENANTS
EVICTED FROM RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY.**

Good afternoon, Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Pamela Heller and I am a student at UConn School of Law and UConn School of Social Work, interning at Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence. I am writing today in opposition to Raised Bill 361: AN ACT CONCERNING POSSESSIONS AND PERSONAL EFFECTS OF TENANTS EVICTED FROM RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY.

This bill allows a landlord to dispose of a tenant's personal property, a major change from the current law, which requires that a neutral third party, the town, hold onto the possessions of the tenant for 15 days after an eviction. The current system protects tenants not home at the time of eviction from losing all of their belongings. The

proposed change would treat the possessions of the tenant as abandoned, but under Connecticut law generally, abandonment requires that the owner *intentionally* abandon the property. This proposed change would treat money that falls out of someone's pocket with more protection than all of the belongings of an evicted tenant. Many evicted tenants have no intention whatsoever of abandoning their property, but for many reasons are not able to remove their possessions at the precise time of eviction.

This proposed change would be especially problematic for victims of domestic violence, for two main reasons. First, families experiencing domestic violence may be more vulnerable to eviction, and second, victims who have left a violent home may be unable to collect their belongings prior to an eviction. The current system protects victims of domestic violence and should not be changed.

Domestic violence in the home can lead to an increased risk of eviction because of the disturbances caused by the fighting, the inability of a battered spouse to pay rent after leaving the home to seek shelter, and the reality that non-payment of rent by batterers is a tactic of abuse. In short, many victims of domestic violence, through no fault of their own, may be subject to summary process and eviction. These victims must be protected from losing all of their material belongings, including items with sentimental value like photographs, children's clothing, jewelry, and other irreplaceable mementos. Starting over

after domestic violence is difficult enough, survivors of family violence should not face yet another challenge in that process.

After being subject to summary process, due to circumstances beyond their control, victims of domestic violence face the reality that they cannot safely return to their home to collect their belongings. Their abuser either lives in the home as well or would be likely to look for the victim there. Furthermore, while staying in shelter, victims will have very little space to store belongings. Victims generally leave with nothing, and in doing so run the real risk that they will never see any of their belongings again. Please do not increase this already significant risk by passing this bill.

Perpetrators of domestic violence often throw away or destroy the belongings of their victims. This is a form of abuse. Do not allow abusive practices like this to become a normal and accepted part of the evictions process. Protect tenants and protect victims of domestic violence from abusive landlord-tenant practices. Thank you.