

March 20, 2008

Testimony of landlord John Souza, 581 Farmington Ave, Hartford CT

Small Claims Bill HB 5920

As a landlord in Hartford and surrounding towns I use the small claims court to try and claim monies that are often owed when a tenant vacates with an unpaid balance due. Most often the tenant was evicted, for various reasons, and does not leave a forwarding address.

The slow pace of the small claims process since the centralization (separation from summary process court) of the court has severely hampered the process. In years past I could file a claim of suite and within a few days, the notice of suite was sent to the tenant (under eviction) while they were still in my building. This service was followed by a hearing day set within 30 days. This system allowed me to get a judgment from most tenants who left owing money. Though it doesn't guarantee payment of the judgment, it was a good system and those who owed money, were held responsible.

Today the average time it takes to receive the notice of suite from the court after I file is approximately 75-90 days with a hearing 30 days later! This does not work, the tenants who are evicted and owe monies don't leave a forwarding address, so there is no simple way to serve them a notice of suite. I often don't bother trying to use the small claims system now because I don't have an address after they move out. **These unrecoverable monies are paid by good tenants in the form of larger rent increases and deferred maintenance etc....**

Please return small claims to the summary process court, this will keep the responsibility for the unpaid debts where it belongs, **with the evicted tenants!!**

Recent evictions that I didn't file a small claim suit because of the slow system:

Daniel S. 84 Buckingham St, Hartford Owes \$ 850

Yvonne W. 447 Capitol Ave. Hartford Owes \$190

Paul M. 581 Farmington Ave. Hartford Owes \$ 653