

Thank you for allowing me to testify before your committee today.

My name is Jim Kennedy. I own a single family dwelling in the city of Harrisburg. If you ask the Mayor and his "full time codes inspectors", I live in a two unit dwelling in the 1900 block of Derry street. I explain that bit of lunacy in a minute. Yesterday as I watched Mayor Reed testify before this committee I was shocked by his gall. He would have you believe than Harrisburg's woes are all the result of a group of terrorist property owners who "blight entire neighborhoods." Mayor Reed has deliberately misled you at best, or more probably, has simply lied about who is responsible. After I've listed a few of the causes for our present situation, I am sure that the idea of giving these terrorists more power will make you shiver the way it does for me.

- Self -
Harrisburg requires that all property sold within it's city limits be inspected by their codes enforcement officers prior to the sale. The inspection notes lists three levels of violation with a Class "A" violation being the most severe. You should know that their inspectors write ALL violations as class "A". Such violations listed in the report when I purchased my property included peeling paint on cutters and downspouts, and small cracks in the plaster walls

Confidential

in the downstairs bay room. These inspections are not about safety. They are simply an attempt by the city to extort money from the property owners.

These new owners are given the choice of facing the civil and criminal actions described by Mayor Read yesterday, or pay fees to the city for permission to repair these "Class A Safety Violations".

The Mayor has worked to have huge slum areas of our city declared as National Historic Areas. Such a designation places severe limits on the nature and kind of repairs that can be made to a property and doubles or triples the cost of cooperating with their codes enforcement directives. Given the character of their likely tenants, and the regulatory environment, it's a money pit that few intelligent people would knowingly choose to become involved with.

The Mayor has worked to increase the numbers of multi-family low income units in our city to the point that single family home owners like myself are almost an anomaly. He has encouraged the conversion of warehouse into huge low-income apartments which concentrates large numbers of poorly educated, low income or welfare families into many parts of our city. They

have no stake in preserving our quality of life and place a heavy burden on those of us who pay taxes in this city. They are amazingly efficient at bearing children out of wed-lock; children who eventually overwhelm our schools and our resources. The result; I pay more taxes for my little row home on the edge of the slums, than my best friend who lives in a \$110,000, three bedroom ranch in the suburbs of Harrisburg. The average length of time that homes remain on the market in his area is about sixty days. I've had my home on the market for over a year; asking price \$49,000.

The codes enforcement people in Harrisburg indiscriminately use harassment and intimidation to get their way, up to and including breaking the law or ignoring court orders. In 1989 I owned two rental properties in Harrisburg. One on Liberty Street, and the other on second street across from the Governor's mansion. The later forced me into bankruptcy when the heating system failed after a prolonged eviction battle with a dead beat tenant who operated an unlicensed boarding house on the premises. The court was to take custody of the house. I was required to give notice to all persons on the property to vacate before the trustee took possession. The codes

enforcement officers threatened to cite me for not giving the tenants thirty days notice. They also ordered me to provide heating oil for the tenants. I had no money and given the pending bankruptcy, I would have to commit fraud to comply with their order. I pointed this out to them. They never issued a citation, but they never rescinded the order. Additionally after the court relieved me of all responsibility for the debt, and ordered all collection against me halted, the City of Harrisburg, ignored the Court order and continued to send tax bills, and threatening notices to me, and recording tax liens against my wife and I for the next several years. They did not care about the law, only the money held their focus. And these are the people you want to give more power. Additionally, my family has lived at our current address since 1988. During that time, the City of Harrisburg, has charged me double for sewer, and garbage removal. They claim that my home is a two unit dwelling inspite of the fact that only my family has lived there for nearly ten years. They refuse to change the designation unless I allow them to inspect my home. My home was an abandoned shell when I moved into it. I've spent thousands to repair the damaged or worn out systems in my home. I'm proud of my home, but given my previous experience with their codes inspectors, I will

not voluntarily allow any city official to enter my home.

I could go on for hours; instead, I'll list a few other actions by our Mayor that cause people to abandon this city. The mayor has given tax incentives to business to move out of my neighborhood and into Downtown. Penn National Insurance were good neighbors, and their employees brought needed commerce to the businesses in our area. Now we are surrounded with empty buildings and my taxes will go up.

The City has created an artificial market for junk art by requiring that such eye sores be made a part of all new buildings in Downtown. Does anyone honestly believe that the piece scrape costing tens of thousands of dollars erected in front of the DEP building is art?

The Mayor's other pet projects include, a museum for stolen Civil War artifacts, a multi million dollar play ground in the middle of a flood zone, also know as City Island, a huge new high school that that's not needed and no one like myself who will have to pay the bills, wants.

And for all of that, I can't even get the City to ~~undo~~ the street drain that each year backs water onto my property, or cut back the tree that threatens to

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ever my gas and water lines. They planted that line on the sidewalk out about
the time I was born. I complained about it over five years ago. In no way
this year the proposed budget for Harrisburg will exceed 85 million dollars
Why? You cannot convince me that it's reasonable when my son's second
grade teacher needs my wife to make copies for her job because she doesn't
have adequate access to a copy machine. Where will the 85 million dollars
come from? These questions, and the answers to them are the reasons that
business, like Sears, Ryder's trucks, and others have abandoned Harrisburg
If you pass into law anything that gives these people more power, the terms
I've described will accelerate. Fewer home owners will move into the city and
those like me that are still here will leave

Thank you

DON KENNEDY

1953 2647 S

WARRICK, IN 47304

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