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Mobile-home rent-control bill vetoed

By [Timm Herdt \(Contact\)](#)
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SACRAMENTO — Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger vetoed a bill on Friday that would have preserved rent-control protections for residents of mobile home parks that are partially converted to condominium ownership.

The bill had been closely watched in Ventura County, where the owners of at least four parks have begun proceedings to convert to condominiums.

"It feels like a kick in the solar plexus," said Supervisor Steve Bennett of Ventura when informed of the veto. Bennett had helped mobilize local government officials across the state in support of the bill, AB1542, by Assemblywoman Noreen Evans, D-Santa Rosa.

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In a statement released by her office, Evans called the veto "reckless and cold-hearted," saying that thousands of seniors and working-class families "now face being put out on the street. They were counting on the governor, and he really let them down."

In his veto message, Schwarzenegger noted that statewide rent controls for those classified as low-income will remain in place.



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"While the bill's intent is to preserve low-income housing, it also extends rent control in certain circumstances to mobile-home owners in much of the state no matter what their income level," he wrote. "It is unclear what state interest is served by the extension of rent control to those who do not have an economic disadvantage."

Under existing law, when an owner converts a park to condominium ownership, the park is freed from local rent-control ordinances as soon as a single unit is sold. At that point, those classified as low-income are still covered by the state law, but the rent for all others can be raised in stages over four years to whatever market conditions will allow.

Bennett called that a formula to allow a transfer of wealth from moderate-income residents to the owners of their parks.

"Somebody who is a few dollars over the low-income threshold can now watch their rents go up dramatically," he said. "The statewide standard is so inadequate."

More than 300 cities and counties in the state have enacted mobile-home rent-control ordinances in recognition of the unique economic circumstances of those residents. They own their homes but not the land under them, which means the value of their property is largely dependent on the predictability of future rents.

Schwarzenegger said he understands the "uniqueness" of their situation.

"I understand the importance of having stability in your living situation," he said. "This need for stability was eloquently expressed by the many seniors throughout California who have written to me on both sides of this bill."

Schwarzenegger urged lawmakers next year "to find a solution that provides true balance for all the stakeholders involved."

Bennett said he appreciated the governor's invitation to revisit the issue.

"We've got to get back in the saddle and go after it again," he said.

In the meantime, Bennett said, he would ask the county's lawyers to continue to research steps the county might be able to take.

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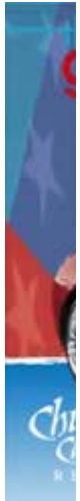
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