

Senator O'Brien and committee members, HB93 under consideration has placed me in a state of bewilderment. While I am a staunch believer in the rights of private property, it certainly does not exempt a land owner from society altogether. When a land owner goes into business renting what they rightfully can, it becomes just that: business.

In all businesses in our State there are costs. Retail, service, manufacturing, and others are required to procure various licensing and follow many regulations as dictated by Federal, State, and Local laws. Bewildering indeed that in an era of President Elect Trump's vision to roll back these regulations that the Ohio General Assembly wishes to impose MORE on local government. I ask, is local government a business? Or is the land owner choosing to conduct business? Do local governments operate to make profit? Or does the land owner? A municipality must operate, a land owner chooses to be a business.

Let's examine the reverse engineering of this bill. A local government must maintain in working order water and sewage plants. Constant pressure from unfunded mandates, costly repairs, upgrades, and all factors are not free. If a city cannot collect bills from water and sewer use properly and timely, will Columbus bail them out? Will there be an HB6 to save local governments when neither tenant or owner pay? The Assembly over time has gutted the Local Government Fund, are we to have faith a rescue effort for a broken filter will be swift? I posit this to the committee and yourself: When a local government can no longer collect bills to maintain their public works and duties, and no HB6 for them, from where will the funds be available? The answer is the citizens that pay THEIR bills! As a Councilor in my city, in this scenario may I submit to you a roster of all police and firefighters and ask YOU who gets laid off because we HAVE to replace a pump station's equipment? Are we to sacrifice law and order over years because a land owner does not want to participate in a functioning society? Not a value I have as a conservative.

Then there is the issue of land owners themselves. If you explore the initiative of what this suggestion would accomplish, look deep. Is it really beneficial? What will a landlord do when the first tenant does not pay, up until the point of shutoff? The tenant moves, possibly out of state, and no contact can be made? Mind you, a structure without water is posted as "Uninhabitable". Now the real action begins. This bill requires 180 days before lien action can be taken, with yet MORE procedures than ever before. As a side note, I'm still perplexed who wrote it, land owners or lawyers? Seems like enriching them both at the cost of citizens. But I digress.

So the water is now off, and until paid the land owner cannot rent. Meanwhile, the price of chemicals in that 180 day span at the water treatment facility have gone up 2.5%. Looks like the owner occupied citizenry must pay more to bail out a business that ignored the responsibility of participating in a city. My constituents need not be asked to pay more because another land owner does not want to pay. What do you propose next, a tenant trashes a unit and a special fund set up with the people of the jurisdiction paying a monthly fee into it? The land owner knows the risk and reward system of their business, changing the rules for them to have special treatment is a detriment to the civil whole.

I cannot speak for other districts, but in my Home Ruled Chartered Municipality Barberton, we are not savages or barbarians. We understand life happens and work with people on their bills if circumstances are present. However, tolerance for a land owner's property could potentially be very strict if it is on the Rental Registration and now posted as "Uninhabitable".

Another option that is on our table at the local level: rental registration fees. Currently we have in place \$100 per year per unit. Perhaps to safeguard our utility plants for ALL of our citizenry I could bring forth increasing it to \$500 or \$750. After all, there is always a cost of doing business.

I urge you all to reject this bill. You all have at one point either represented your hometowns or do currently. I must say the ratio of cities that provide water and sewer that oppose this measure versus those that support it must be so lopsided that passage would not only be a slap in the local government's faces, but a harder slap to citizens who would end up subsidizing this abhorrent exploit that preys on them instead of uplifts them.

Thank you,  
Bebe Heitic  
Councilor At-Large (R-Barberton)