

Town Halls

Over 500 people attended Town Hall Meetings in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens.

March 19 in the Bronx hosted by Community Action for Safe Apartments (CASA)

April 14 in Brooklyn hosted by Pratt Area Community Council

April 21 in Manhattan hosted by the Goddard Riverside Community Center

April 30 in Queens hosted by Catholic Migration Services



Support from Elected Officials

The Town Halls were attended by many elected officials who showed their support and pledged to be champions of Intro 214:

Council Member Mark Levine

Council Member Vanessa Gibson

Council Member Helen Rosenthal

Council Member Mathieu Eugene

Council Member Antonio Reynoso

Assembly Member Walter Mosley

Senator Jesse Hamilton

Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer

NYC Public Advocate Letitia James

NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer

The legislation has over 39 sponsors in the City Council. The Right to Counsel NYC Coalition has collected over 1,500 signatures to the Mayor urging him to pledge his support for Intro 214.

Right to Counsel Town Hall Meetings

**Tenants Share Their Stories and
Show Their Support for Right to Counsel**

March-April 2015



The Right to Counsel Coalition of NYC is made up of tenant organizing groups, tenant advocates, law schools and legal services organizations. We are working together to ensure that our city's housing courts are a place of fairness, justice and equity. We do not support forced displacements that can and should be prevented and we believe that safe and affordable housing is central to our city's future. We are working on establishing a right for New York residents to be represented by licensed, qualified and experienced attorneys when they go to housing court to defend their rights.



This spring, the Right to Counsel NYC Coalition organized town hall meetings in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan and Queens. Tenants came to learn about Intro 214, an exciting bill that would make New York City the first city in the nation to guarantee legal representation for tenants facing the loss their home. Every 4.5 minutes someone in NYC is evicted. Every 4.5 minutes, justice is denied to New Yorkers. People deserve the right to defend their most important need—their home.

At every town hall, tenants performed skits showing a typical day in housing court: the long lines, intimidating landlord attorneys, and unhelpful court clerks. This experience in housing court is so common that hundreds of tenants nodded acknowledging this common experience. Tenants also worked in small groups to strategize how to mobilize support to ensure that Right to Counsel passes!

In the span of a little over a month, close to 500 tenants dedicated their time and energy to learn about what right to counsel is, what it isn't, to share stories and to strategize about how we can build power to make sure Intro 214 passes!

- Nearly 30,000 families were evicted in New York City last year. 90% of them did not have an attorney.
- There are over 60,000 people in our shelter systems. Evictions are the number one reason people go into shelters.
- 52% of evicted tenants come from rent stabilized apartments.

**Increased funding for legal services isn't enough.
Tenants deserve a RIGHT to counsel.**



"I don't want anyone else to go through the humiliating, intimidating experience that I went through in Housing Court." —Queens Resident

"If you have never been to Housing Court, it's hard to know what goes on there"
—Tenant Leader, Catholic Migration

"You should expect your city to do better."
—Council Member Helen Rosenthal

"I (with no degree) keep beating my landlord in Housing Court"—Manhattan Tenant

"Right to Counsel will really transform what lawyers can do."
—Professor Mary Zulack, Columbia Law School

"This city has extraordinary lawyers for tenants."—Professor Mary Zulack

"100,000 rent regulated apartments have been lost in the past decade in Manhattan."
—Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer

"The day of just paying a fine is over for landlords. We are going to use the law."
—NYC Public Advocate Letitia James

"Regular New Yorkers don't have fancy lawyers."
—NYC Public Advocate Letitia James

"It is unacceptable that there are more parts for landlords than there are for tenants when you walk into Housing Court."
—NYC Public Advocate Letitia James

"We have heard of cases in which a tenant shows up with an attorney and the landlord's attorney drops the case."

—Council Member Mark Levine

"Privately, judges are aghast at what is happening in their courtrooms."

—Council Member Mark Levine

"NYC can be a leader with Right to Counsel."
—Council Member Gibson

"We have to keep families in their homes."
—Council Member Vanessa Gibson

"11,000 evictions in the Bronx, many were absolutely preventable."
—Council Member Vanessa Gibson

"Housing is a right. It's not a privilege."
—Council Member Helen Rosenthal

"It is really horrifyingly to see people sign stipulations they don't understand."
—Larry Wood, Tenant Organizer, Goddard-Riverside Law Project

"We are all one paycheck away from being homeless, especially without right to counsel."
—Bronx Tenant