

Letters to The Times

Rent Control in Mobile Parks

■ "Justices Back Rent Control for Mobile Home Owners," April 2:

The Supreme Court's recent ruling that local rent control laws apply even when mobile home tenants sell their spaces to new buyers will protect California cities from litigation by land owners, but the court's ruling is no victory for affordable housing. Most residents of mobile homes own the coaches, renting only the concrete pad on which the coach rests. By voiding any possibility of vacancy decontrol, such as is available to owners of rent-controlled apartment buildings, the Supreme Court has permanently reduced the value of the land on which a rent-controlled mobile home sits.

Unfortunately, the loss imposed on the land owner serves no social purpose, because his or her sacrifice does not increase the availability of affordable housing. The combined value of a given coach at a given site is not affected by site rent control. However, site rent control transfers much of the value in the mobile home site to the owner of the coach. The owner of the coach will include this windfall in the sales price of his or her unit.

Further, the economic injury imposed on land owners by mobile home rent control laws is sufficient to prevent new investments in mobile home parks in any of the 87 California cities that have such laws. The court's ruling provides owners of all mobile home parks, rent controlled or otherwise, with clear economic incentives to shift the use of their land to less regulated uses. Both effects can only reduce the availability of this important low-cost housing option.

JIM MOORE
Assistant Professor of Urban
and Regional Planning, USC

■ I believe your editorial "Rent Control Made Simpler" (April 4) to be misleading.

In fact, what actually happened in the case was that the court rejected the physical taking challenge because owners rent their property voluntarily, and are under no statutory compulsion to continue rental operation. Although the court found no physical taking and upheld the Califor-

nia court's decision, important constitutional questions have been reserved for another day, including 1) regulatory taking theories under Nollan and Penn Central and 2) the possibility that legislation compelling owners to rent their property may effect a physical taking.

The court sidestepped substantive due process and regulatory taking issues.

The court's ruling on the Yee case was only one decision on a fairly narrow issue, which resulted in leaving open many important constitutional questions concerning closure, conversion and regulatory takings, among other things.

In spite of this decision, mobile home park owner organizations remain committed to pursuing constructive solutions on issues of importance to owners, residents, the housing industry and the public.

VICKIE TALLEY, Executive Director
Manufactured Housing Educational Trust
Anaheim

FRIDAY

APRIL 17, 1992

Los Angeles Times

DAVID LAVENTHOL
Publisher and Chief Executive Officer

SHELBY COFFEY III
Editor and
Executive Vice President

EUGENE L. FALK
Executive Vice President,
Administration

GEORGE J. COTLIAR
Managing Editor

STEVEN L. ISENBERG
Executive Vice President,
Marketing

NOEL GREENWOOD
Senior Editor

LAWRENCE M. HIGBY
Senior Vice President,
Consumer Marketing

NARDA ZACCHINO
Associate Editor

WILLIAM A. NIESE
Senior Vice President,
Law and Human Resources

THOMAS PLATE
Editor
of the Editorial Pages

Vice Presidents

FRANK DEL OLMO
Deputy Editor
of the Editorial Pages

WILLIAM R. ISINGER
JEFFREY S. KLEIN
R. MARILYN LEE
MICHAEL D. WILLIAMS

Publishers

HARRISON GRAY OTIS, 1882-1917
HARRY CHANDLER, 1917-1944
NORMAN CHANDLER, 1944-1960
OTIS CHANDLER, 1960-1980
TOM JOHNSON, 1980-1989

Published by The Times Mirror Company

ROBERT F. ERBURY, Chairman
DAVID LAVENTHOL, President

How to Write Us

The Times welcomes expressions of all views. Letters should be brief and are subject to condensation. They must include signature, valid mailing address and telephone number. Pseudonyms and initials will not be used. Because of the volume of mail received, unpublished letters cannot be acknowledged. Fax letters to (213) 237-7679 or send to:

Letters to the Editor, Los Angeles Times
Times Mirror Square, Los Angeles, CA 90053