



PETALUMA HOMEOWNERS LOSE RENT CONTROL

By Lloyd L. Rochambeau

Sandalwood Estates in Petaluma is the latest to lose protection under a rent control program. The 178 space park owned by Bill Feeney successfully scrapped the program to raise rents up to as much as 100 percent. Since enactment in 1994, the owner has sought increases while also converting all but three spaces to long term leases, which removes them from rent control.

In the case of Irene and Michael Hansen, their rent went from \$619.00 a month to \$1,262.00 for their tiny piece of dirt. Mr. Feeney claims he is entitled to the increase because of improvements he had made. Those improvements were most likely replacements of infrastructure and amenities, which are in fact part of the cost of doing business. Such replacements are for the park owners' property and should therefore be his cost to bear and not to be passed on to tenants.

Park Owners are very well organized and have unlimited finances to engage a statewide campaign to cripple or eliminate rent control protections. The end result will be more homeowners driven from their parks with some ending up homeless. It also results in diminishing the number of affordable housing units available to the poor, retired, and disabled population.

Abusive actions like this, as well as hundreds of violations of the Mobilehome Residents Law (MRL) and Title 25 inflict a living hell upon mobilehome owners from which there is no fair resolution. Why? Because there is no enforcement, other than poor people hiring a lawyer to sue the rich and greedy Park Owners and Investors.

There could be enforcement, but the Governor and the State legislators would have to find the backbone and guts to pass laws that put Investors and Homeowners on equal ground. The big question is how long before the nearly one million people living in mobile home parks rise up and fight back saying they are mad as hell and they're not going to take it anymore ?