

Jenner & Block Secures \$600,000 Recovery for Fire-Displaced Tenants

News

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Jenner & Block Special Counsel Carl Wedoff obtained approximately \$600,000 in settlement payments on behalf of low-income tenants displaced from their rent-stabilized apartments following a fire in the neighborhood of Windsor Terrace, Brooklyn, New York.

The matter presented significant complexity. The fire rendered the building completely uninhabitable, scattering tenants, across New York City, while the building owner/landlord slow-walked repairs. Because the units were rent stabilized and therefore priced at less- than market rates, the landlord had a financial incentive to delay the legal process given that prolonged displacement would likely pressure tenants to abandon their leases, ultimately allowing him to re-rent the units at two to three times the prior rents.

Carl secured court orders directing the owner/landlord to complete building inspections and repairs by date-certain deadlines. The landlord repeatedly violated those orders, prompting Carl to negotiate a stipulated order entitling each tenant to \$100 per day for every day that the tenants remained displaced past a set deadline, plus legal fees and expenses. Interim payments were obtained along the way, representing meaningful relief for each tenant while all rights were preserved. The landlord's assets, held through a web of family members and shell companies, complicated enforcement efforts, as did the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ultimately, Carl negotiated a final settlement of \$75,000 per tenant in additional payments, spread over 18 months, fully resolving all claims. The total recovery of approximately \$600,000 — including the \$450,000 settlement agreement plus earlier interim payments of roughly \$100,000–\$150,000 — is orders of magnitude larger than what is typical in housing repair matters. The firm retains the ability to enforce the full judgment, which stands in the low seven figures, should any installment be missed.

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