

Honorable Dean Skelos
Temporary President, New York State Senate
Room 330, Capitol
Albany, NY 12247

Honorable Jeffrey Klein
Temporary President, New York State Senate
Room 432, Capitol
Albany, NY 12247

Honorable Sheldon Silver
Speaker, New York State Assembly
Room 932, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12248

Dear Co-Coalition Leaders Skelos and Klein, and Speaker Silver:

On behalf of Mayors from across the state, we respectfully ask you to support the **New York State Abandoned Property Neighborhood Relief Act of 2014** (A9341, S7350). The communities we represent are facing the growing problem of vacant and abandoned residential properties, otherwise known as zombie homes. According to recent data from RealtyTrac, almost 15 percent of all New York State residential mortgages could be classified as zombie properties.

These zombie properties fall into disrepair and contribute to neighborhood blight. These properties also cause a decline in the community's real estate market and increase the likelihood of crimes, such as vandalism and arson. As a result, cash strapped municipalities are forced to expend local taxpayer funds to prevent vacant and abandoned homes from becoming public hazards.

The New York State Abandoned Property Neighborhood Relief Act of 2014 will address the problem of vacant and abandoned residential properties in a comprehensive fashion. First, homeowners will be provided with early notice that they are legally entitled to remain in their homes until ordered to leave by a court. This will ensure that families know their rights, and aren't coaxed into vacating their residences prematurely.

Once enacted, this Act will require mortgagees and their loan servicers and agents to identify, secure and maintain vacant and abandoned properties much earlier in the mortgage delinquency timeline. Current law imposes a duty on mortgagees to maintain vacant residential property, but only after a Judgment of Foreclosure and Sale has been entered. Unfortunately, this law has created a loophole and allowed mortgagees and loan servicers to drag their feet. There is evidence that lenders are slowing down the foreclosure process, and in some cases, seeking court orders to cancel the foreclosure action in the middle of the process. This bill would close the current loophole, changing state law to make lenders responsible for delinquent properties soon after they are abandoned.

The Act will also create a Vacant and Abandoned Property Registry to be established and maintained by the Attorney General. It will require that mortgagees and their loan servicers and agents electronically register these properties with the newly-created registry. The registry, in turn, will provide a much needed and readily available source of information on vacant and abandoned residential properties to local officials throughout the State. The registry will also be supplemented

by a toll-free hotline that residents can use to report suspected vacant and abandoned properties to the Attorney General's office and receive information regarding the status of registered properties, including the identity of the mortgagee or agent responsible for maintaining them.

We're confident that by working together, we can resolve the problem of vacant and abandoned residential properties, which is plaguing our communities. We thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to working with you to advance this critical legislation during the 2014 legislative session.

Sincerely,



Kathy Sheehan,
City of Albany



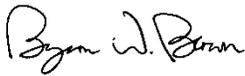
Shawn Hogan,
City of Hornell



Ann M. Thane,
City of Amsterdam



Samuel Teresi,
City of Jamestown



Byron W. Brown,
City of Buffalo



Shane R. Gallo,
City of Kingston



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City of Elmira



Geoffrey M. Szymanski,
City of Lackawanna



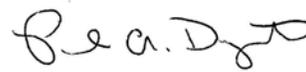
Svante Myrick,
City of Ithaca



Judith L. Kennedy,
City of Newburgh



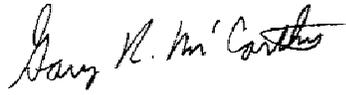
Wayne J. Hall,
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