Landlords battle tenants' rights legislation

A suburban apartment boom is causing a battle over tenants' rights in the state House of Representatives,
"There's a shortage of apartment units — no question about it," Daniel Cooper, altorney for the Apartment Association of Michigan, loid the House Consumers Committee last week.
But Cooper called a package of tenants' rights bills, sponsored by Rep. Maxine Berman, D-Southileld, "an over-reaction to the fantastie growth in the economy, especially in her district."

the economy, especially in her dis-trict." "Your area is one of the hottest in America with EDS coming in," said Cooper, referring to a high-tech subsi-diary of General Motors which is build-ing in Oakland County. Cooper and the landlords opposed all but one of the bills as burdensome.

"IT IS NOT burdensome," Berman countered, "to place into law what most good landlords are doing."
And the second-term lawmaker, herself an apartment-dweller, said public testimony showed tenants are having problems in Westland, Birmingham, Troy and Farmington Hills, along with Macomb County, Ann Arbor and Detroit.



creases to long-term tenant were dropped from one bill.

A Consumers Committee meeting last week turned into a polite tug-of-war between Cooper and Berman. Cooper was a tatle legislator from southern Oakland County for 14 years until defeated by consumer advocate Doug Ross in a 1978 Democratic state Senate primery. (Ross now directs the state "This doesn't control rents," she said, noting that provisions to limit rental in-

REPUBLICANS on the panel gave only one of Berman's bills any support — HB 4525, requiring longer notices of rent increases. Otherwise, a thinly velled partisan split appeared to be de-veloping on the Democratic-controlled committee.

Rep. Justine Barns, D-Westland, missed the meeting but cast a proxy vote for all of Berman's bills.

Cooper objected that Berman's pack-age would be a burden on all landlords though only a few are bad. "There are nuts everywhere. Your legislation is precipitous," he said. Cooper also objected that the bills would require too much paperwork for

BERMAN COUNTERED, "Do you think 24 hours notice (of a rent increase) is sufficient?"
"No landlords are doing this," Coo-

"To tanance per replied.
"The tenant must give a 30-day notice to vacate," Berman shot back. "If a tenant is given a rent increase notice one day before, it gives them (tenanta) precious little time to look for a new place."

"No money changes hands. This bill doesn't require anything new. It gives the tenant can have time to look around," she added.

THE BILL requiring landlords to rovide a five-year history of rents

THE BILL requiring landlords to provide a five-year history of rents drew more fire.

"Why am I responsible to report to him (tenant) my business? Does he have to tell me his?" said Grand Rapids landlady Teresa Cardinale. "They could care less what my costs are."

Cooper agreed, arguing, "Does a car dealer have to give you the price history of a car?"

An outstate landlord association rep-

"WE MUST have some good laws,"
countered Rep. Michael Bennane, DDetroil, "or we wouldn't have so many
landlords. People are making menoy
... a lot of money... They re picking

. a lot of money. They're picking up as much properly as they can."
"Detroit, which used to be a homeowners' city, is becoming a renters' town," said Bennane, who supported Berman's bills.

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Only one of the landlord-tenant bills before the House Consumers Commit-tee has been reported out. Sponsor of each is state Rep. Maxime Berman, D-Southfield. Here is the status of each: HB 4525 — Landlord must provide tenant written notice of a rent increase

tenant written notice of a rent increase in twice the period for which the tenant must give notice of intent to leave. Thus, if tenant is required to give 30 days notice of intent to move, landlord must give 60 days notice of rent increase. Reported out of committee

crease. Reported out of committee to House floor. HB 4580 — Tenant's security deposit can't be increased during occupancy. Withdrawn by sponsor.

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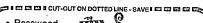












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