

I am George Perides and with my wife we own 20 apartments in Brattleboro and Springfield,

I am afraid that when we are talking about terrible tenants and owners, we are talking about the extremes who are probably less than 10% of either group. The tenants speak as if all landlords just want to kick them out, only to charge higher rents, or landlords who don't maintain the buildings. The housing providers and managers, speak, as if all tenants are drug dealers, and keep their apartments filthy or cause mayhem. I believe that more than 80% of tenants and owners are reasonable people who are satisfied with the tenancy arrangements.

Speaking of our experience, we have never evicted through the court system any tenant. We have however, terminated the tenancy either for drug dealing or for extreme noise that interfered with the other tenants' ability to live peacefully. Whenever, we entertained eviction we realized that it would take too long. When the judiciary says that 75% of the cases are solved (disposed) within 6 months, while the owners say it takes much longer, it is because they speak about two different timetables. The judiciary starts the clock the day the papers are filed, since that is the date, they become aware of the dispute. For the owner, however, the process has started several months earlier. No-one files papers on the 5th of the month for non-payment on the 1st. The tenant has already missed 2 or more months of payments and we have asked them to pay or make arrangements, only to receive promises but no money. In case of drugs and noise, usually the other tenants have complained over the course of several months and they have threatened to move out, or the police has repeatedly, come to resolve disputes.

My suggestion is to form regional arbitration boards, consisting of 1-2 persons that can resolve such disputes in a timely fashion, within weeks from filing. Should the parties want to have legal representation, they can, to help them present their cases. The case would be decided based on pictures, receipts and or documents that support each party's case in just one meeting that would take 30 minutes to an hour. The standard however would be much lower than a regular court. The arbitration board can easily figure out if the eviction is based on real problems or just because the owner wants to raise the rent. The board could decide in a binding or not binding fashion the case. That decision, however, would follow the case, should a party decide to go to court. Even if it is not binding, it will push things to the direction of speed and justice. The parties will fast understand that their case will have a very small chance of reversal from the board's recommendation. Just the existence of such a board

will also push the parties to participate and alleviate the burden of the judiciary.