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## Eviction Defense: Landlords Behaving Badly

For over 30 years, Maria (age 71) and Armando (age 91) had been perfect tenants. They paid their rent on time, maintained their apartment, and never called attention to themselves. But then a new landlord purchased their building. Almost immediately he began harassing the long term tenants like Maria and Armando, in the hopes that they would move out so that he could replace them with new tenants at market rents.

First the landlord turned off the gas. This prevented Maria and Armando from taking hot showers or cooking meals on the gas stove. But they were living on a fixed income and they stayed because they could not afford to move. So the landlord screamed at them: "If you won't leave, then you get no more water!" and he turned off the water. Maria and Armando were forced to visit their neighbor to bathe or use the toilet. But still they stayed. One night, the landlord stormed into their apartment and actually removed the front door to their apartment - took it right off the hinges. For good measure he also removed their mailbox.

After this, Maria and Armando came to ICLC for help. Our team immediately demanded that the landlord restore water and gas service and that the door and mailbox be reinstalled. When we visited the property to ensure that the repairs had been made, the landlord's contractor claimed that the water had been "restored" because there was a garden hose outside which he insisted that Maria and Armando could drag up the stairs to use in their apartment.

ICLC asserted that the landlord had constructively evicted the tenants and that they were entitled to the statutory \$18,300 in relocation costs. After extensive negotiations with the landlord's attorney failed, ICLC prepared and was about to file a court complaint. At the last hour, the landlord arrived at our office with a check for \$18,300 in relocation costs. Maria and Armando used this money to move into better housing across the street, where they report they are quite happy.