

CHAPTER 29 ACTIVITY
Expressing Your OpinionGLENCOE
STREET LAW
A Course in Practical Law

Directions: Read the two articles below—one for rent control and one against rent control. Answer the questions that follow on a separate sheet of paper.

For Rent Control

Housing is a fundamental right, one of the human rights guaranteed to everyone. Providing financial assistance to tenants with low income is absolutely necessary because the amount of affordable housing is declining, and the number of tenants is increasing. Tenants are mostly poor, live in substandard housing, and pay very high proportions of their income for rent.

Rent control is necessary to protect people who, through no fault of their own, would be priced out of decent housing. The fact that over 200 localities in the United States currently have some form of rent regulation and that more than ten percent of all rental units in the country are subject to rent control shows that rent control is a good idea.

Additionally, rent control is good because it reduces the frequency at which people move. People care about their neighbors, and they feel a loss when a long-time neighbor moves away. Rent control promotes stability.

Against Rent Control

Rent control is not limited to people who are poor. The majority of renters are not poor, and the majority of low-income renters live in adequate housing. Rent control is not necessary to achieve adequate housing, since it could also be achieved by providing households with rent assistance financed by broad-based taxes.

Owners of rental property carry a heavy burden. There is a false assumption that landlords make excessive profits. Studies have shown that there are many low-income owners and many high-income renters. Additionally, rent control costs money to administer.

The difficulty of finding a controlled unit leads many tenants to live in units that are not well suited to their current circumstances.

Landlords of rent control properties pay less to maintain the property than landlords of noncontrolled properties.⁽¹⁾

1. What are the arguments made in each article?
2. Are there any arguments that you can add to both articles?
3. Which position do you favor and why?

(1) Arguments were taken from U. of Virginia School of Law John M. Olin Foundation: Symposium on Law Economics of Local Government: Is Rent Control Good Social Policy?" 67 Chi-Kent L. Rev 931 (1991).