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**NEWS | CITY**

**LANDLORD**  
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but, he said, they broke into the row-house sometime earlier this year and were living as squatters — a situation that came to the landlord's attention only after neighbors complained about the house's broken windows.

Neighbors told him that his former tenants were dealing drugs from the house and that a man was shot inside the rowhouse in August.

"Before they got evicted, they basically trashed the whole house — they broke everything," Gu said. "After that, I cleaned it up, and if I cannot find a good tenant, I would rather just leave it locked up, [so I] kept it vacant."

The illegal tenants have since vacated Gu's property, after Linda Lawrence, a constituent-services representative in Councilwoman Joan Krajewski's office, discovered that the gas was turned on illegally and had it shut off.

Gu estimated that he'll spend at least \$5,000 on repairs of holes in the walls and broken windows and bills, including a \$1,500 water bill caused by a leak. He regrets buying the property, but said that he'd lose too much money if he tried to resell it now. He's not sure if he'll try renting again once it's repaired.

"The first step is just to clean it up," he said. "I don't have any specific plans yet," he said. "I was so happy that I got those people out."

# Rent justice for abuse victims

## Bill would protect domestic-violence sufferers

BY JAN RANSOM  
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**V**ERNETTA Burger was victimized twice: once when her estranged husband kicked in her apartment door about 15 years ago and beat her to a pulp.

And then again when her landlord held her liable for rent, damages and cleaning blood-splattered walls after she expressed a need to escape her abuser.

"I felt if I would have stayed, I would have been killed," said Burger, adding that she fled but owed \$2,400 in rent for the remainder of her lease.

City Council's Law and Government Committee gave preliminary approval yesterday to a bill introduced by Councilman Bill Greenlee that would prohibit landlords from terminating a lease based on a ten-

ant's status as a domestic-violence victim and require that they terminate or adjust the lease upon the victim's request.

"We feel it's really unfair that a person that is already a victim becomes a victim again by the landlord taking action against that person," said Greenlee, adding that 22 states have a similar law in place.

Under the proposed bill, if a tenant wants to end a lease, a written request would need to be made within 90 days of reporting the incident of domestic violence or sexual assault, the issuance of a protection-from-abuse order or the approval of a consent agreement and at least 30 days before the requested termination date. Also, the tenant would need proof of abuse, including a court order, medical records or a police incident report.

The bill would not limit the landlord's or court's authority

to evict a domestic-violence-victim tenant for any violation of a lease other than violence against the tenant. Anyone with a grievance could file a complaint with the Fair Housing Commission or allege violations in court.

The committee also approved a bill introduced by Councilman Bill Green that would require lobbyists to register with the city.

Several amendments were made to include lobbying efforts before the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corp., the Philadelphia Authority for Industrial Development, the Redevelopment Authority, any other city-related agencies and the school district and its boards.

Also, if a city official or public employee attends a reception in connection with his or her public office or employment and receives any food, beverage or entertainment, the fair market value of it would not be considered a gift unless lobbying occurs.

Attorneys would not be considered lobbyists if they are involved in matters from beginning to end. They would also not be considered lobbyists if they made no effort on behalf of an interest group to influence general policy and made no direct communication with city officials not connected to the issue.

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