



Veto fight coming

Lawmaker to try again to get protections for mobile home residents passed

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SPRINGFIELD — An Elgin lawmaker says Gov. Rod Blagojevich was misguided in rejecting a proposed law offering increased consumer protections to area mobile home residents, and she'll try to override his veto later this year.

In issuing his veto, Blagojevich said the proposal, which applies only to mobile home parks owned by publicly traded corporations, doesn't affect enough people to warrant changing the law.

"While I recognize and appreciate the hard work of all the sponsors in passing this legislation, the bill would apply to only three of the approximately 900 Illinois mobile home parks," the governor said in his veto message, adding any changes should apply to everyone.

But state Rep. Ruth Munson, an Elgin Republican who sponsored the proposal, said more than a thousand people live in those three parks and argued there are actually more than 10 such communities encompassing thousands more who would have been covered by the added protections.

"I will be filing a motion to override it," Munson said Tuesday. "We're going to work hard on that."

The proposed law attempts to expand the legal protections offered to mobile home owners regarding the land they lease for the homes. Mobile home parks present a unique situation in that the residents own their homes, but not the land the homes are on.

Munson said changes to how mobile home park landlords determine rental rates have sent rent payments soaring, pricing many elderly residents out of their own mobile homes. Contrary to popular perception, once mobile homes are in place, "they're not meant to be moved again," Munson said.

As proposed, mobile home land leases would need to cover at least two years, they could be canceled within five days of signing and if there's a dispute over rental rates, an outside appraiser would determine the fair market value.

The proposal easily passed the House and Senate this spring, and if support remains at the same levels, Munson would have more than enough votes to override the governor's veto during lawmakers' fall session in November. That action requires the support of 60 percent of lawmakers. In the 118-member House, overriding the veto requires 71 votes. Munson's proposal received 83 votes when the House approved it in March. In the 59-member Senate, an override requires 36 votes. The proposal had the support of 46 senators in March.

Since the proposed law wasn't slated to take effect until Jan. 1, 2007, anyway, an override in the fall would ensure the protections are put in place as planned.

But even that may be too late for some. Munson said she was aware of nearly a half-dozen mobile home owners who say they may have to leave their homes this summer because they can no longer afford to rent the land they're on.

Munson became involved in response to rent disputes at Willow Lakes Estates in Elgin. A message left with Equity Lifestyle Properties, the park's ownership group, was not returned Tuesday.

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