

# Opinion

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Sentinel Editorial

## Challenging The Council's Move

When two candidates described by supporters as socialists were elected last November to the City Council, there were rumblings about how a new majority on that body would be making some historic political moves in the city of Santa Cruz.

One of the liberal majority's first moves on an issue of philosophical consequence resulted in history being made in the city, but not in the manner the foursome might appreciate.

Submission Thursday of more than 4,000 signatures on petitions asking the City Council to rescind a tenant eviction law which passed on a 4-3 vote apparently will mark the first time in Santa Cruz history a council approved ordinance has been successfully challenged through a referendum.

The tenant eviction law proposal was part of an overall plan centered on rent control, an issue which also was headed for council majority approval until a sincere threat was made that it too would be disputed by referendum.

The presentation of the petitions was historical in an official sense, but it also carries significance in the fact that rarely, if ever, have the conservative forces in the community been so aroused about an issue that they responded as quickly and intensely through the initiative process.

The subject of just cause eviction was referred by the council to the Housing Advisory Committee for study in 1980. That group after some review wasn't able to agree on a formal recommendation to the council.

The result was more than one proposal being presented to the council in its discussion for approval, which

took place April 13.

The just cause eviction ordinance, for which there was no big public outcry but which would place a heavy burden of proof on the landlord in landlord-tenant disputes, would have become law today if it weren't for the quick response by the citizenry.

Some 2,680 valid voter signatures were required to place the issue again before the City Council and the 4,000-plus presented Thursday appear to be more than enough to consider the effort a success.

The city clerk has 30 days to verify the signatures. If it is deemed an adequate number has been collected, then the council will be left with two choices: repeal the ordinance, or put the subject before city voters in an election.

It's doubtful that a council majority as intent as this one is on becoming directly involved in property/housing related matters is going to give up at this point.

It is probable that Santa Cruz voters will see the subject before them on the November general election ballot.

Challenge of the just cause eviction ordinance that has overriding implications of eroding traditional private property values, while at the same time placing the burden of proof on one party, is reasonable.

The consequence is clearly a setback for the council majority whose socialistic tendencies have been publicized in newspapers from the New York Times to the Los Angeles Times. But in Santa Cruz, there are people in the city who have let it be known they don't care for some of the actions that have taken place over the past six months.

Don Graff