

Parks' rent-control study sets off senior citizens' ire

EXCERPTS FROM TIPOFF COLUMN

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Over the years, City Councilman Bernard Parks has proved he is not afraid to swim upstream.

Whether it was a fight with the Los Angeles Police Protective League or former Mayor James Hahn when Parks was LAPD chief, Parks has gone his own way.

But this time the fight might be even more than he can stand up to.

Following through on a campaign promise he made during his run for mayor this year, Parks won council support for a measure to study the city's 1978 rent-control law, which now covers tenants living in more than 600,000 units around the city.

As a mayoral candidate, Parks won the endorsement of the Apartment Association of Greater Los Angeles because of his belief that apartment owners should be allowed to pass along more of their costs to tenants.

Since the approval of that study last week, council offices have been flooded with calls from angry tenants - many of them senior citizens living on fixed incomes.

Callers are vowing to protest - and campaign against - anyone who tries to make dramatic changes in the law that they fear could push them out of their units.

The always jittery neighborhood council folks have received assurances from Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa that they will continue to play a role in setting city budget priorities. And he promises to have fun doing it.

That, alone, would be a neat trick since drafting budgets is about as exciting as watching a City Council debate over the nuances of a zoning ordinance.

But the weekly City Watch newsletter talks to Deputy Mayor Larry Frank, who says the neighborhood councils will meet at City Hall on Oct. 1 to kick off the budget meetings.

"We're going to do it differently," Frank promised. "The mayor will be there and it will be informative, effective and fun."