

Who's the Guy Behind the "So-Called" Justice for Renters Act?

Michael Weinstein, President and Chairman of the Board of the A.I.D.S. Healthcare Foundation, Returns With Version 3.0 of Propositions 10 and 21

There's No "Justice" for Rental Housing Providers in This Latest Proposal

By Daniel M. Yukelson, Executive Director

He is at it again. And, once again those of us in the rental housing industry must face-off against a well-financed adversary. Like before, it will take \$80 million to \$90 million to defeat this latest attack at the ballot box. Like before, it will take our collective, all-out effort to successfully oppose the Justice for Renters Act and with any luck, it will be "three strikes and you're out."

Following 2018's resounding defeat of the badly flawed Proposition 10 ballot initiative and 2020's overwhelming defeat of Proposition 21, Michael Weinstein has raised the issue of rent control once again and he's waging war against California's housing providers with his latest attempt to repeal The Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act ("Costa-Hawkins") through his latest initiative, "Justice for Renters Act."

Weinstein (no relation to the notorious, Harvey Weinstein) is the about 70-year-old the President and Chairman of the Board of the A.I.D.S. Healthcare Foundation ("AHF"), a Los Angeles, California based non-profit with a \$1.4 Billion budget. According to the AHF website, the organization serves nearly one million patients through some 320 treatment clinics in 39 countries worldwide. And Weinstein and AHF are the principal backers (a/k/a, "money") of the Justice for Renters Act. If Weinstein's and AHF's ballot initiative wins in November 2024, the multifamily housing industry could "lose" vacancy decontrol and exemptions from rent control for single family homes and condominiums, and our investments may again fall under the very worse, strict local rent control regulations we have not seen in decades. "Vacancy decontrol" means that rental housing providers can set the rental rates upon a vacancy.

As part of his duties running AHF, Weinstein also directs the organization's aggressive legal and political strategy. This agenda, often puzzling to his critics, has alienated government officials, community leaders and other A.I.D.S. activists who otherwise support AHF's healthcare mission. AHF and/or Weinstein have been named in over 200 lawsuits and in more than 100 in Los Angeles County alone.

For his latest venture, it has been reported that Weinstein and his fellow Justice for Renters Act backers had been paying up to \$3.00 per signature to qualify the initiative for the November 2024 ballot, and another \$2.00 for signatures on a letter addressed to Governor Newsom urging the Governor's support of the Justice for Renters Act. As a result, questions had arisen about whether the paid for signatures on the Governor letter should be disclosed with a campaign disclaimer, which had not been done.

So, who is this Michael Weinstein?

The Early Years

Weinstein was born in the Bensonhurst neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York to a family of what has been described as "leftwing Jews," according to New York Times profile from April 2017. According to

sources who met with Weinstein, as a young child he and his family lived in a rent stabilized, New York City apartment, which allowed his family's low-income household to get by, and which experience made Weinstein a lifelong proponent of rent controlled housing.

By the time Weinstein was college-aged, he had declared himself both gay and a Marxist, more specifically a Trotskyite. According to the same New York Times report:

"In 1972, when Weinstein was 19, he traveled to California and joined Los Angeles's gay activism scene. An outsider among both mainstream gays (for being a Marxist) and Marxists (for being gay), Weinstein decided to start his own group, which he called the Lavender and Red Union. The group eventually merged with a gay friendly Trotskyite organization in New York called the Spartacist League, which offered Weinstein a leadership position, requiring him to move back to the East Coast."

Weinstein would eventually split with the Spartacist League and return to California where he worked some odd jobs. It was not long before Weinstein got back into political activism and became a leader in an organized fight over a statewide initiative, according to the Times. The campaign foreshadowed Weinstein's use of over-the-top messaging and scare tactics.

In 1986, the right-wing conspiracy theorist Lyndon LaRouche introduced a ballot referendum in California that would have enabled employers to fire people with A.I.D.S. and empowered the government to quarantine them [Proposition 64]. Early polling suggested that LaRouche's Proposition 64 initiative had broad support. Along with Brownlie and other friends, Weinstein started his own group to fight LaRouche's proposition. In a move that anticipated his later shock marketing campaigns, Weinstein distributed leaflets with the headline "STOP A.I.D.S. CONCENTRATION CAMPS" and organized a torch lit march on LaRouche's Silver Lake office. Mainstream gay activists abhorred Weinstein's strong-arm tactics, fearing he might alienate suburban voters. But after the measure lost in a landslide, with 71 percent opposed, the L.A. Weekly named Weinstein "Best Young Activist."

In 1987, Weinstein founded A.I.D.S. Hospice Foundation with several close friends. In 1996, the name was changed to the A.I.D.S. Healthcare Foundation.

Controversial Approach to Sex Education

Nearly thirty years after the Proposition 64 battle, Weinstein continues to roll out shock and awe advertising when it came to garnering attention for his causes. The New York Times described the Weinstein driven AHF "safe sex" billboards in both U.S. cities and abroad as a "trolling approach to sexual health messaging." The New York Times further noted:

"In 2013, [Weinstein] put up signs in several cities with the image of a magma spewing volcano captioned, 'SYPHILIS EXPLOSION.' The following year, in South Central, he posted billboards with two black men spooning in bed alongside the leading question 'Trust Him?' Some ads have been humorous and topical — a sendup of the Netflix logo replaced with the mantra 'Get Tested and Chill,' a Bernie Sanders parody with the modified slogan 'Feel the Burn?' Others have hectored the public with reproachful questions: 'Friends with Benefits?' 'Sexually Reckless?' 'Worried?' One A.H.F. billboard managed to cause a national scandal in Uganda."

This profile of Weinstein noted that AHF. employs a “15 person in house creative agency to create its messaging. The expense is justified because the billboards are a marketing channel: They seek to stir dread in the libertine masses, not only to stem what Weinstein sees as a rising tide of promiscuity but also to drive traffic to his clinics.”

Longtime A.I.D.S. Activists Cleve Jones was blunt about his feelings for Weinstein’s approach to sex education: "I am consistently angered and confused and disgusted by his prevention campaigns, which seem to encourage a stigma against homosexuality," said Jones, who had the idea for the A.I.D.S. Memorial Quilt. "I don't know of anyone who agrees with him or claims to understand what his motivation is."

Weinstein’s Political Agenda – A Diversion of Funding for A.I.D.S. Research and Care?

Since 2012, Weinstein has used AHF funds, mainly profits from the organization’s pharmacy and clinic businesses, to fight a series of expensive political initiatives, several which have a tenuous connection to the group’s mission to fight A.I.D.S. Weinstein critics suggest that these political efforts are a waste of precious resources that should be used to combat the A.I.D.S. epidemic. Also, many of the committees Weinstein established to champion these political causes have been called out for unethical campaign tactics. Some examples:

- In 2012, AHF bankrolled and passed an L.A. County ordinance mandating condom use in adult films. After the County ignored implementation of the law, AHF spent vast sums of money suing the county in court to require it enforce the law.
- In 2016, AHF attempted to expand its influence by sponsoring two California statewide initiatives. Proposition 60 was statewide version of the “condoms in porn” measure. Proposition 61 was a measure to control drug prices by mandating that state agencies pay no more for prescription drugs than the Department of Veterans Affairs. Many observers doubted Prop 61’s efficacy. But notably, the campaign attracted support from Democratic Presidential candidate Bernie Sanders. Both measures failed. The final bill to AHF: \$22 million.
- In 2017, AHF was the driving force behind Measure S, an anti-development initiative in the City of Los Angeles that would have halted the city's practice of rewriting planning rules for individual real estate projects.
- In February 2017, the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department sent a letter to the Measure S committee, funded largely by AHF, demanding that it stop distributing campaign mailers that looked like official Sheriff Department eviction notices. AHF poured more than \$5 million into the campaign. Voters overwhelmingly rejected Measure S.
- In 2017, AHF undeterred by the loss of the drug initiative Prop 61 sponsored virtually the same statewide ballot measure in Ohio. It was dubbed Issue 2. Again, after a bruising campaign with the pharmaceutical industry in which AHF spent a reported \$18 million, the measure lost. During the campaign the head of the Cleveland Clinic sent a cease and desist letter to the AHF committee for using his likeness and opinion in a mailer without his permission.

“A.H.F.’s problem is that once it created the largest A.I.D.S. empire on the planet, it started using that power for nefarious purposes: Michael Weinstein’s twisted political views,” Peter Staley, founder of the Treatment Action Group, and a long time A.I.D.S. activist, told the New York Times.

In November 2016, the Free Speech Coalition — the trade association for the adult entertainment industry — filed a formal complaint with the Internal Revenue Service against the AHF over what it calls

“excessive campaign spending” in violation of the rules governing 501(c)(3) nonprofits.” “The money is intended for the uncompensated care of people living with and affected by H.I.V., money that is sorely needed for people who are dying,” Eric Paul Leue, head of the Free Speech Coalition, told *The Real Deal*, a real estate publication. The Free Speech Coalition complaint alleged political spending and lawsuits fall squarely outside the charity’s mandate and constitute a misuse of funds intended for H.I.V.-patient care. Should the Free Speech Coalition’s complaint prove successful, the AHF could face penalties, or even lose its nonprofit status. Leue describes Weinstein as a “pariah” among the community of LGBT activists, and questions Weinstein’s use of AHF’s funds seemingly as a personal piggy bank. According to Leue: “It’s true he did some very important work in the 1980s, but somewhere along the lines through his successes he has lost his focus, and he sits atop his tower, deciding things based on personal whims that unrelated to what the organization was founded to do.”

Weinstein told the *Los Angeles Times* that AHF only spends 2% of its budget on advocacy. The official outcome of the Free Speech Coalition complaint is unknown, but it appears to have not succeeded in stopping Weinstein’s advocacy work.

In January 2023, it was revealed by the *Los Angeles Times* that Los Angeles City Councilmember, Kevin De León, had worked as a paid consultant for AHF, a job that paid DeLeon more than \$100,000 in the six months prior to his taking office. AHF which was pursuing a lawsuit against the City of Los Angeles at the time alleging the city illegally denied funding for an affordable housing project that AHF was proposing was helped by Kevin DeLeon in the weeks before he officially took office. DeLeon was able to arrange a meeting among city staffers that eventually got AHF its approvals. DeLeon’s connections with AHF have raised uncomfortable questions surrounding DeLeón’s handling of problems at residential hotels that AHF owns in his district. Political ethics experts said that DeLeón’s relationship with AHF and failure to disclose his financial ties raise a potential conflict-of-interest concerns.

AHF’s Continued Anti-Development Crusade

Despite the failure of Measure S, AHF has taken it on itself to impede development in Los Angeles. It made its campaign into a permanent lobbying group called the Coalition to Preserve L.A., headed by former L.A. Weekly editor Jill Stewart, and has filed at least two lawsuits against developments in Hollywood.

In August 2016, the LA City Council approved a 15-story mixed-use development in Hollywood by Hudson Pacific Properties. Soon after, AHF filed a lawsuit challenging the Council’s decision. In July 2017, AHF agreed to drop its lawsuit after the developer Hudson Pacific Properties promised to scale back the project reducing it to 13 stories.

AHF has a second lawsuit against another Hollywood development. The origins of Weinstein’s anti-development efforts, which critics believe actually hurts the creation of affordable housing is worth revisiting. A February 2017 article in the *Los Angeles Times* described the impetus for AHF anti-development efforts:

“The foundation entered the debate over L.A.’s recent real estate boom two years ago (2015), after the Miami-based firm Crescent Heights proposed two 30-story towers [in Hollywood] next to the A.I.D.S. Healthcare Foundation’s headquarters. City officials welcomed the 731-unit Palladium Residences project, noting that it would be a block from a subway station and go up

on an empty lot, avoiding the demolition of existing apartments. But the foundation opposed the development, arguing that it was too tall and too dense for its location on Sunset Boulevard. Early in that fight, public affairs consultant Steve Afriat, who was lobbying City Hall on behalf of Crescent Heights, asked for a meeting with Weinstein to hear his concerns. Afriat said that during that meeting, Weinstein complained that the Palladium would block his views of the Hollywood Hills. 'He said if we lowered it to 12 stories, he would no longer oppose the project,' Afriat said. 'If we didn't, he threatened to sue and do a referendum.'

Another account of the Afriat-Weinstein meeting was recounted in the *The Real Deal*, the real estate publication:

Per Afriat's recollection, the meeting began pleasantly enough — until they got down to business. "He got obsessive when he was making his demands, saying that he was going to sue," Afriat said of the meeting. "[He] talked about a referendum. When he started to make all those threats, it was hard to work something out. I warned my client: this guy is a little off."

Weinstein's war against development simply "is not understandable," said Dana Cuff, a professor of architecture/urban design and urban planning at the Luskin School of Public Affairs at the University of California, Los Angeles in an interview with *The Advocate* magazine. "I'd go further than that; it's actually a misuse of their funds."

Weinstein Attacks Science of A.I.D.S. Drug

Weinstein has been the subject of intense criticism for his multi-year campaign against Truvada, the brand name of PrEP, a once a day antiretroviral that can prevent H.I.V. infection by 99 percent. In 2014, Weinstein made headlines after referring to PrEP as a "party drug." Since then he has actively worked to undermine the roll out of the drug as something that will lead to unsafe sex. He is "virtually alone" in his opinion among scientists and A.I.D.S. activists. Despite the efficacy of the drug, however, only 10 percent of the target population uses Truvada, according to a July 2018 opinion piece in the *New York Times*. The *New York Times* provided the following background on Weinstein impact on the drug's rollout:

"In 2015, the Center for Disease Control began recommending PrEP for anyone at "high risk" for H.I.V. infection, including any gay man not in a monogamous relationship who has had sex in the last six months without a condom (1.2 million people, according to the Center for Disease Control's estimates). Many hailed it as an era-defining advance.

Weinstein, virtually alone among major A.I.D.S. figures, has assailed PrEP, calling it a "party drug" that could lead to a collapse in condom use. In a citizen petition to the Food and Drug Administration following PrEP's approval in 2012, A.H.F.'s lawyer denounced the treatment as "unsafe and ineffective." Weinstein called on Margaret Hamburg, the agency's commissioner, to resign over the issue, suggesting she was part of a pharma-led plot to put millions of Americans on a new medication.

Weinstein's critique of PrEP is a fringe view. According to Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases, support for PrEP among researchers and regulators is all but universal. "It's having an extraordinarily positive impact," he says. Robert Grant, a professor of medicine at U.C.S.F. and a leading PrEP researcher, credits the treatment with "a

plummeting decline” in H.I.V. transmission rates among white gay men in San Francisco. Nevertheless, Weinstein is quoted regularly in articles about the treatment, and his noisy skepticism has reverberated across the Internet. Some argue that Weinstein’s grandstanding during public hearings delayed PrEP’s approval by the Center for Disease Control, and that his sowing of doubt about the medication is continuing to suppress its use, especially in black and Latino communities.

“What I find in my practice,” Grant says, “is that A.H.F.’s propaganda does not impress or influence privileged groups of gay men. They can see right through it. But when I talk to some people of color who are clients in my clinics, I find they’ve heard the A.H.F. message, and it gives them pause, it makes them concerned, it appeals to their sense that this isn’t for them.” Despite the Center for Disease Control’s efforts, very few people, even now, are on PrEP; according to recent estimates, only about 100,000 people take it.

An L.A. Weekly article on PrEP quoted Peter Staley, founder of the Treatment Action Group, as saying, “[Weinstein] started taking anti-science positions — positions that didn't make any sense, but they were great press hooks, and garnered him a lot of attention.” Staley did not stop there:

"In the world I live in, [Weinstein] has hurt the public health. He can say he's the largest A.I.D.S. organization in the world, and on a dollar-sign basis, he's right. He has created a massive pharmacy empire. But that doesn't make him an A.I.D.S. activist. AHF gets laughed out of international A.I.D.S. conferences now. He is completely ignored in Washington. And he is completely boxed out of everything the actual A.I.D.S. activist community does."

Ernest Hopkins, director of legislative affairs for the San Francisco A.I.D.S. Foundation, referring to Weinstein’s opposition to PrEP added: “If you’re prepared to say whatever you want and lie and demagogue and misrepresent the facts, then you can get a lot of airtime, and you can also persuade a lot of people.” According to the L.A. Weekly article, a “group of 164 H.I.V./A.I.D.S. organizations and individuals have signed a letter endorsing the use of PrEP and condemning Weinstein for his claims about the drug.”

Criminal Conspiracy?

In June 2014, as noted in an earlier report, three former AHF manager-level employees in the A.I.D.S. Healthcare Foundation’s Southern Bureau filed a federal lawsuit against AHF in United States District Court, Southern District of Florida for violations of the Federal False Claims Act and Florida False Claims Act. From 2011 to 2013, according to the complaint, federal health care programs, including Medicare and Medicaid, as well as H.I.V./A.I.D.S. assistance programs funded by HRSA and Center for Disease Control, paid AHF tens of millions of dollars based on “fraudulent” claims. Besides the damages to the U.S. and State of Florida of AHF’s “unjust enrichment,” the individual plaintiffs also alleged retaliatory employment actions, including termination, and sought double back-pay losses, plus front pay, interest, costs, attorneys’ fees and special damages for emotional distress and harm to reputations.

According to the complaint, AHF instituted an incentive system to encourage employees to maximize revenues by getting patients to take H.I.V. tests, to utilize AHF and its affiliates for treatment and insurance, and for pharmacy needs. In this system, “AHF paid its H.I.V. testing personnel on a

'commission based' formula that combined a base salary amount and an additional 'commission' amount that was predicated on the volume of tests performed."

In 2010, the complaint alleged, the "kickback scheme" began in California and H.I.V.-positive patients into AHF's constellation of services -- was AHF's "holy grail" and the key to its business model." According to the complaint, AHF President Michael Weinstein bears personal responsibility for these practices, having advocated for: (i) increased testing to raise H.I.V. "positivity" rates; (ii) improved "linkage" of patients to and retention in AHF medical care; and (iii) the payment of financial incentives to patients for the purpose of inducing self-referrals to AHF medical care.

According to the complaint, Weinstein specifically directed staff to raise the patient financial incentive to \$50 immediately and to implement the incentive program nationally throughout the AHF organization. Weinstein also directed a patient financial incentive of \$50 to those falling out of care to induce them to return to AHF medical care and a financial incentive of up to \$50 every few months to remain in AHF care, as well as an additional financial "bonus" at the end of one year of such care.

On May 30, 2017, the U.S. government filed a formal brief in the case (a Statement of Interest) in which it wrote that the former AHF employees were "incorrect" in their assertions about AHF's business model of testing and linkage. On June 9, 2017, the court granted AHF a summary judgment and ruled that Plaintiffs "shall take nothing for their claims." The case is currently under appeal to be argued in federal court in Miami, Florida the week of July 16, 2018. For his part, Weinstein has unabashedly defended AHF's aggressive recruitment practices. "We should never be in a position of apologizing for our success," he told the NY Times. "The fact that we take a business model from the private sector and utilize it on behalf of a nonprofit is a great thing."

In 2019, California state senator Ben Hueso (D-Chula Vista) formally asked state Attorney General Xavier Becerra to investigate whether AHF is fraudulently misusing savings from a federal drug-discount program designed to help poor patients. The senator's allegations center on a somewhat obscure federal drug discount program known as 340B, which requires pharmaceutical companies to sell drugs at steep discounts to participating hospitals and other providers that serve a significant percentage of indigent patients. AHF, after receiving the drug discount, is permitted to charge public programs like Medicaid and Medicare for the standard amount to fund services to assist low income patients. However, none of the savings reaped from the 340B program— nor any federal grant or funding program — can be used for lobbying or any kind of political expenses. The investigation is still pending.

Lawsuits Against Government Entities

Weinstein and AHF have reportedly filed numerous lawsuits against public agencies relating to funding A.I.D.S. services and specifically over denial of contracts to AHF. Many of these lawsuits have involved the County of Los Angeles.

In August 2013, AHF and Michael Weinstein sued the County of Los Angeles in Los Angeles (CA) Superior Court as case number BC517979. The complaint sought damages and declaratory relief based on retaliatory conduct, and violation of constitutional rights. AHF's complaint accused Los Angeles County of having "initiated a retaliatory campaign" against the organization and Weinstein. The conduct included "conspiracy to create incorrect audit findings and demand millions of dollars from AHF based upon the findings." The purpose of the conduct was allegedly "intimidate providers into

submission and prevent them from speaking out critically against the County.” AHF had long criticized Los Angeles County over wasteful spending, noncompetitive contracts for pharmacy administrative services and inaction on regulating the porn industry, among other issues, according to the complaint. The lawsuit stemmed from Los Angeles County’s demand that AHF reimburse it for more than \$5.2 million in overbillings. A 2010 audit by the County’s Auditor Controller found the AHF had overbilled the County \$1,752,439. Another second audit in 2013 found that AHF had overbilled the County for \$3.5 million, bring the total to over \$5.2 million.

The cross-complaint noted that AHF filed a similar “retaliation” case against Los Angeles County in United States District Court in December 2013, a case that consumed considerable county resources with its extensive discovery process. The court ruled that “AHF did not allocate its costs and instead the County for 100% of certain costs despite receiving funding from other sources.” A summary judgment against the “retaliation” claims in favor of LA County was issued in February 2014 and the federal case was dismissed. However, the U.S. District judge’s ruling for the county was notable for its substance. “Rather than a sincere attempt to vindicate their First Amendment rights,” the LA Times quoted the judge as writing, “the court fears that plaintiffs instituted this action to obtain a tactical advantage in their ongoing political battles.”

To illustrate his conclusion, the judge included an excerpt from an email Weinstein sent to a foundation staff member shortly before the suit was filed:

“It is time to take the gloves off,” Weinstein wrote, “We need to go after Zev [Yaroslavsky] directly and hard. He is the real power behind our problems with the county on porn, the audit and fee-for-service. Plus, he is a lame duck and an arrogant jerk. His Berman-Waxman power base is dead, and he and others need to be taught a lesson. The voters are with us.”

Weinstein wanted AHF to call for the resignations of both Los Angeles County’s public health director and the manager of its sexually transmitted disease programs. Now retired, County Supervisor Yaroslavsky told the Los Angeles Times that the ruling was a “complete vindication” of the county’s position. “Contrary to some high-minded First Amendment motivation, [Weinstein was] shown to be a thug,” Yaroslavsky said. “He’s used his nonprofit organization in a crass and bullying political way to get his way, which is to avoid being held accountable.”

AHF the Slumlord?

In 2020, Tenants at the AHF’s Madison Hotel on 7th Street in Skid Row filed a lawsuit accusing the non-profit foundation of permitting slum-like conditions at the aging 220-unit building. The complaint cited constant and persistent mold, bedbugs, and roach infestations, and plumbing and electricity problems. The complaint also claimed that the elevator at the property has been out of order for nine months, requiring elderly and disabled renters to struggle to upper floors on foot. Other accusations include AHF’s failure to repair and remodel a shower area that has been sitting half-renovated leaving residents with no private bathrooms, to share a single toilet and shower on each floor.

Weinstein acknowledged the tenants’ concerns were legitimate, but he quickly pointed blame at the City of Los Angeles, which he accused of delaying for months an inspection of a new electrical system to support the elevator the foundation installed as part of a multi-million-dollar renovation. Weinstein also claimed that elderly and disabled renters were offered an option to move to the property’s first

floor. According to City of Los Angeles officials, however, AHF did not obtain the proper permits for the planned renovations and did not submit an acceptable plan to protect tenants during construction.

As of 2020, AHF had acquired six hotels and a motel in locations within the City of Los Angeles and owned nearly 800 residential units at that time that typically rent for between \$400 to \$600 a month. However, according to a report in the Los Angeles Times, at the time of the filing of the lawsuit, court records showed that AHF may have evicted as many as 40 tenants since 2017. Many of the evicted residents had claimed the evictions were illegal and that the AIDS Healthcare Foundation did not give them a chance to make-up past due rent payments after they fell behind.

In 2023, the Los Angeles Times reported resident complaints about another AHF Los Angeles “Skid Row” property, the Madison Hotel, which had experienced prolonged elevator outages forcing some elderly residents to pay others to carry them up and down stairs. The Los Angeles Times reported: “In its more than five years running the Madison, elevator outages have led residents, many of whom are elderly and infirm, to sleep in the lobby, pay other tenants to carry them to their rooms or remain trapped on the upper floors.” In the same article, the Los Angeles Times also noted: “In 2018, after a blind tenant fell more than 12 feet down the open shaft, the elevator was out of service for seven months, according to Los Angeles city records and court testimony.” As a result, 18 residents of AHF’s Madison Hotel had filed a lawsuit over the elevator issues – the case was pending at the time this article was written.

2018’s Proposition 10 and 2020’s Proposition 21

Weinstein and AHF were the principal financial backers of 2018’s Proposition 10, the “Affordable Housing Act,” which was very similar to 2020’s Proposition 21. After Weinstein and AHF funded \$25 Million to \$30 Million to support proponents of Proposition 10, the ill-fated initiative failed by a margin of about 65 percent voting against to 35 percent in favor.

Not more than 6 months after the defeat of Proposition 10, Weinstein had already concocted the concept of the “Rental Affordability Act” (Proposition 21) and started making plans for the 2020 ballot initiative to prod the State’s Legislators to pass an extreme form of Statewide rent regulations. In a statement at the time, Weinstein said: ““This is a complicated issue that ought to be resolved by the Legislature. It’s actually malpractice by the Legislature that nothing has been done already.” Although AHF spent approximately \$23 million in support of Proposition 21, it was outspent 3-to-1 by landlord groups and lost by nearly 20 percentage points.

Trying to Buy Votes for the Justice for Renters Act

Michael Weinstein is a rich guy, so why not give it a try...In his zeal to go all out to repeal the Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act and its protections from local rent control and gather the necessary 550,000 signatures from registered voters to qualify the measure for the ballot, Weinstein went about paying approximately \$3.00 per signature on petitions and \$2.00 per signature on letters to Governor Newsom to support the ballot initiative according to a report published in Politico, “He’s Rich. He’s Pugilistic. And He’s Quietly Paying to Get Gavin Newsom’s Attention. His letter to the Governor apparently did not come with any type of disclaimer as being campaign related. As explained by Politico, “California law on campaign advertising requires general or public communication that’s authorized and paid for by a committee to support a ballot measure to contain a ‘paid for by’ disclaimer.”

In July 2023, the California Secretary of State verified 617,000 signatures supporting the Justice for Renters Act assuring its placement on the November 2024 ballot.

Daniel Yukelson is currently the Executive Director of The Apartment Association of Greater Los Angeles (AAGLA). As a Certified Public Accountant, Yukelson began his career at Ernst & Young, the global accounting firm, and has since served in senior financial roles principally as Chief Financial Officer for various public, private and start-up companies. Prior to joining AAGLA, Yukelson served for 15 years as Chief Financial Officer for Premiere Radio Networks, now a subsidiary of I-Heart Media, and for more than 3 years as Chief Financial Officer of Oasis West Realty, the owner of the Beverly Hilton and Waldorf Astoria Beverly Hills where he was involved with the development and construction of the Waldorf. Yukelson was formerly Chairperson of the City of Beverly Hills Planning Commission and served on both Beverly Hills' Planning Commission for 6 years and Public Works Commission for 3 years.