



## No condo is worth taking vet's home

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Lou Anzalone just wants to be left alone in his house by the ocean, and who has a better right?

He's 88 years old and except for the asthma he's in good health. So is his wife, Lillian, 89. "She yells a lot," Anzalone says, laughing. "You can't yell if you're not healthy."

He was in the Navy during World War II, specializing in maintenance on top-secret radar projects. After the war, he went home to Newark but later his asthma got worse. His doctor told him to find a place where the air was purer and fresher.

He and Lillian got a house in Long Branch just 60 yards from the ocean. He breathed easier.

"You know, my family used to take the train down here when I was a kid," he says. "I loved the place. I still do."

He and Lillian have been happy in that house for 46 years.

But Long Branch wants the old place so it can move a big redevelopment project along. Where Anzalone now pushes back a curtain to look at the Atlantic, condos would be built.

He says the city offered \$304,000 for his house, and though a comparable parcel is on the market for \$1.6 million, Anzalone isn't talking money.

He simply told the city: Nix, not interested, not moving.

"I don't want any money," he says. "At my age, I don't need the money. It's just that I'm used to this place. I like this place. I've been here for 46 years and I'm satisfied with what I have. This is where I want to finish my life."

You want to argue with that?

The city does, and the two sides will be in court next month.

It sounds crazy, forcing a guy out of his home to make things easier for a developer.

Mayor Adam Schneider disagrees, noting that redevelopment in Anzalone's neighborhood already has resulted in the end of a crack house and some other abandoned properties. And no, he says, he is certainly not comparing Anzalone's sweet home to a crack house. He just sees redevelopment making for a better Long Branch.

Moving people like Lou and Lillian Anzalone out of their home may be insane and it may be wrong. But it's also legal.

Wednesday, in fact, was the first anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's Kelo ruling.

That was the 5-4 abomination that allowed the city of New London, Conn., to turn a small neighborhood over to private developers to build fancy condos, fancy offices and fancy shops, and thus increase city ratables. In doing so, the court turned upside down a portion of the Fifth Amendment that reads: "Nor shall private property be taken for public use without just compensation."

People understand that government can seize private property for public use -- a library or a school. But lose his home so a town can assist a private developer? Even if doing so makes an area chic? That's disgusting.

The Kelo decision made homeowners realize it could happen to them. Since the ruling, New Jersey and 42 other states reformed their eminent domain laws or are considering changes. Some states have made reform part of their constitutions.

Assemblywoman Charlotte Vandervalk, R-Hillsdale, introduced a measure last month to stop transfers to the private sector for four years while the matter is studied. But the bill has not been scheduled for a hearing.

So it's up to people (as in: voters) to make their representatives understand that concern over eminent domain abuse run amok needs to be taken seriously.

Just tell them Lou sent you.

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