

Grinding housing into votes

Landlords rarely escape the machinations of politics. Just how far will tinkering with free markets go this election cycle?



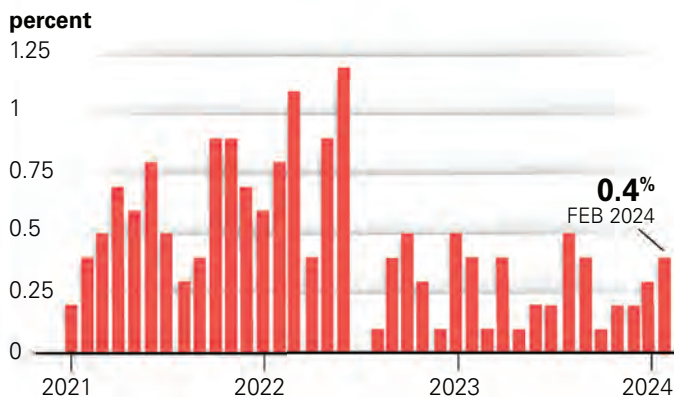
In an election-year effort to shift responsibility for the nation's high costs of living away from economic policies, President Biden is adding corporate landlords to the list—targeting what he calls “rent gouging by corporate landlords.”

POLICIES HAVE CONSEQUENCES

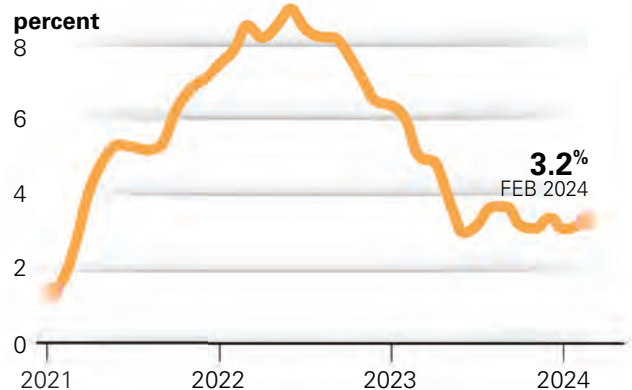
U.S. consumer price index

Feb. 2024

month-over-month percent change



year-over-year percent change





The Biden Administration

claims that corporate landlords are keeping rents artificially high



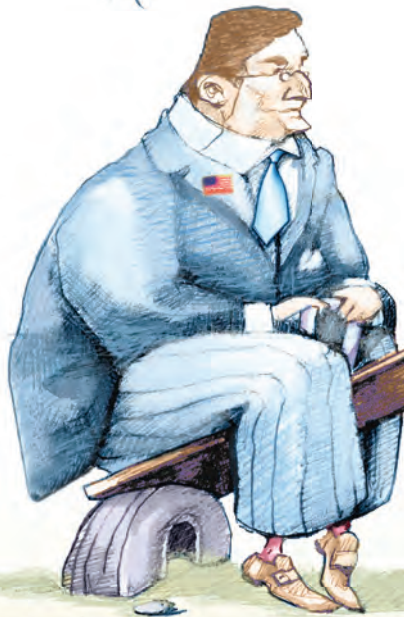
Logical fallacy

Landlords aren't a homogenous group of mindless corporations. Fewer than a fifth of rental properties and less than half of rental units are owned by for-profit businesses.



Landlords

are just the latest of a long list of business sectors erringly blamed for inflation. Other targets include finance, food, drug, energy providers.



In an era of big government and the welfare state perhaps the property-centered vision of the framers cannot be reclaimed. But any change must start by fundamental rethinking the vital place of private property in our constitutional system...

Most landlords are individuals who own a few units

U.S. landlords by number of units owned, 2018



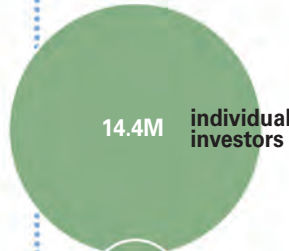
units: 1-4



5-24



25+



3.4M

businesses

130k

16k

1.2M

non-profits, coops, trusteeships, etc

190k

105k

665k

not reported

40k

19k

14k

11k



Could the blame strategy work? The share of respondents who said "large corporations taking advantage of inflation" deserved part of the blame for price increases climbed 9 percent from Nov. to March, reaching 63 percent (Financial Times poll).



Heightened awareness may be the first step toward the restoration of constitutional safeguards for property owners.

Property Rights in American History
James W. Ely, Jr., Vanderbilt University



SOURCE: BIDEN TO TARGET RENT GOUGING? LANDLORDS AS HIGH HOUSING COSTS FACTOR INTO 2024 RACE. REBECCA PICCIOTTO, CNBC, WHITE HOUSE FACT SHEET, U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS VIA PREDIMARCH 12, 2024; PEW RESEARCH CENTER USING CENSUS BUREAU DATA FROM 2019 (THE LAST YEAR THE CENSUS HAS RELIABLE DATA ON RENTAL HOUSING FINANCE SURVEY, 2018; FINANCIAL TIMES MICHIGAN ROSS NATIONWIDE MARCH SURVEY, FEB. 29 - MARCH 4, 2024, MARGIN OF ERROR OF +/-3.1 PERCENT.