

Fed up & fighting foreclosure Angry group protests home auction

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An auction for nearly 130 foreclosed [Queens](#) homes turned into rowdy protest on Friday after housing activists and targets of predatory lending demanded a halt to the sale.

Court officers escorted some 30 demonstrators - mostly members of the advocacy group ACORN - out of the [Jamaica](#) courthouse after they tried to stall the auction with chants and angry protest bids of "Zero dollars!"

"Stop the auction now," group members chanted, before a horde of officers forced them to leave the building.

"Queens homeowners have been the hardest hit," New York ACORN President [Pat Boone](#) said at a rally in front of the courthouse that preceded the auction.

"We need a one-year moratorium on foreclosures," she said.

Boone was concerned about people like Jocelyn Voltaire, 55, who bought her home in [Queens Village](#) more than 20 years ago. When [Voltaire](#) refinanced the home to get the money to start a small business, she said she had no idea her mortgage payments would balloon from \$800 to \$3,800 a month.

"Where am I going to get that money?" said Voltaire, who lost her son in [Iraq](#). "I'm not a doctor. I'm not a lawyer."

Voltaire was able to stay in her home with the help of ACORN, which is trying to renegotiate her mortgage with her lender.

She bid \$0 as foreclosed homes came up on the auction block.

"Now, you want to take my home," she screamed in the courtroom before officers escorted her out.

Southern Queens is the epicenter of [New York City's](#) foreclosure crisis. More than 5,000 Queens homeowners received foreclosure notices in just the first nine months of 2008, according to the [Furman Center](#) for Real Estate and Urban Policy at [New York University](#).

Many of those foreclosures were in Southeastern Queens, with the majority in Jamaica. One in every 34 households there received a foreclosure notice during the first nine months of 2008, according to the Web site [www.RealtyTrac.com](#).

That's more than 13 times the national average.

[Neil Colmenares](#), a Queens bankruptcy attorney who works with clients facing foreclosure, believes things will get better once Congress passes laws to protect homeowners.

But he's not as hopeful for the short term.

"It will get worse before it gets better," Colmenares said. "My guess is that 2009 will be worse than 2008."

ACORN is gearing up for even more protests.

"We need to come back with more people," said ACORN organizer [Jonathan Westin](#), after he was kicked out of the Jamaica courthouse. "We will be back."