
THE CITISTOP! NEWSLETTER

Issue 1

citistop.live.radicaldesigns.org

April 2008

THE BOARD OF SUPES wants to HEAR from YOU

On May 12th you can come and testify in front of the Board of Supervisors and tell them about your experiences with CitiApartments.

In May 2005 the City Attorney filed a lawsuit against CitiApartments - but the lawsuit is not going into trial until 2009! The city needs to hear from us and we need to let them know that we are still paying attention! Supervisor Chris Daly has asked the Board of Supervisors for a hearing on CitiApartments. CitiApartments has the money to be heard loudly at City Hall. This is OUR chance for our voices to be heard and to show the supervisors that we are organized and demand CitiApartments to follow the law!

If you are interested in testifying at the hearing, contact the Citi-STOP campaign at citistop@gmail.com or call Molly at 415.504.5231.

No on 98!

Deceptive Measure Would Abolish Rent Control

Wealthy landlords from across California are spending millions on a deceptive campaign to pass Proposition 98 on this June's ballot! Capitalizing on national outcry about the abuse of eminent domain laws to seize peoples' homes for private development, the landlords have disguised their attack on rent control as eminent domain reform. But their hidden agenda is to eliminate rent control and other government restrictions so they can make hundred of millions of dollars by raising rents. Citi Apartments are experts at getting rid of long term tenants in order to raise rents. Proposition 98 would make it easier for Citi Aprtments to go after tenants, and it would give them a bigger incentive to do so. The hidden agendas included in Proposition 98 also threaten zoning laws that promote affordable housing, protections for senior tenants, and environmental regulations. Tenant Advocates have put a competing measure on the ballot, Proposition 99, which reforms eminent domain but does NOT include these hidden agendas. **No on 98! Yes on 99!**

The First City-Wide CitiApartments Tenant Meeting a Huge Success!

Over 100 tenants and concerned community members met to discuss how to make CitiApartments a real landlord.

On Saturday, February 23, 2008, over 80 tenants and over 20 community and tenant advocates braved the rain to spend an afternoon strategizing about how to make CitiApartments/ Skyline Realty an accountable landlord.



The first half of the meeting was dedicated to a Know-Your-Rights training for tenants in San Francisco and a brief history of the most infamous landlord in San Francisco: Frank Lembi. We learned about CitiApartments' business model and saw that many people in the room had experienced the same kinds of harassment from Citi in an attempt to force them out of their rent-controlled units.

The second half of the meeting gave us time to strategize together in neighborhood groups to come up with ways to ensure that CitiApartments respects our rights as tenants and does not continue to pressure us out of our homes in an effort to make a profit.

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Citi Tenant Meeting continued from front page...

Some tenants talked about their experiences filing lawsuits against Citi for various types of harassment meant to push tenants out of their units. Others talked about the successes they had joining together as a building to resist unfair buyouts, intimidation, illegal construction, and slow repairs.

"When we stood together," one tenant shared, "they eventually left us alone. None of the original tenants have been pushed out of their homes since we started standing up to our new landlord."

Supervisor Chris Daly also visited the meeting and was so impressed by the gathering that he has since helped us to schedule a hearing at City Hall to share our stories with the Board of Supervisors.

"I'd have to say this gathering is impressive," he said. "It says a lot about you ... and a lot about CitiApartments." He stressed the need for lawmakers and others at City Hall to hear the voice of the tenants and not just their corporate landlord.

On May 12, 2008, at 1pm, tenants will now have their chance to bring their testimonies to City Hall. *See front page for more information about this.*

GET INVOLVED...

INTERESTED IN GETTING INVOLVED WITH THE CITI-STOP CAMPAIGN? WE ARE LOOKING FOR PEOPLE INTERESTED IN INFORMING TENANTS OF THEIR RIGHTS, SPEAKING AT THE UPCOMING HEARING, AND WRITING TESTIMONIES FOR THE WEBSITE.

WE ALSO NEED

- BUILDING CAPTAINS
- HELP CALLING TENANTS
- TRANSLATION OF MATERIALS
- MEDIA HELP
- WORK ON THE WEBSITE
- RESEARCH

CONTACT US!

CitiSTOP! has a new website.

Visit us at <http://citistop.live.radicaldesigns.org>.
or email citistop@gmail.com to get involved

For counseling about individual issues in your apartment or building, visit the Tenant's Union at 558 Capp Street. Counseling hours are at www.sftu.org or call 415-282-6622

ALYSABETH'S STORY

I had been living in my apartment for a little over a year when the manager informed me and my neighbors that our building would be bought by CitiApartments. We were lucky to find out before our new landlord arrived, because it gave us a chance to prepare for their bad tactics.

First, we had a meeting in my neighbor's apartment where we explained to everybody what was happening, what their rights are, and talked about what our defense plan would be. Everyone was told most explicitly "*Do not talk to anyone, do not answer questions, do not open the door to strangers, do not sign anything. If you have questions, call the Tenderloin Housing Clinic law office.*"

The morning the building was bought, large men in black suits and ear pieces knocked on every door, handing people inch-thick documents that they claimed to be our "new" leases. Later that day, when we came home from work, 24-hour notices were plastered on all of our doors stating that we had to permit the owner entry to check for working smoke detectors. My neighbor and I made response notices that allowed residents to choose one of the following options:

- *My smoke detector works fine. No landlord nor representative, nor contractor of the landlord has permission to enter this apartment. Under no circumstance are pictures or other recordings to take place;*
- *My smoke detector is missing or broken. Only one person may enter the unit to fix or replace the smoke detector. Under no circumstance are pictures or other recordings to take place.*

This happened every day for at least a week. We received new 24-hour notices, and every day my neighbor and I would make responses and knock on our neighbors doors and help them fill them out.

We continued to talk to our neighbors, collectively organizing to make complaints to the Departments of Public Health and Building Inspection, and be confrontational with landlord representatives that were reportedly harassing vulnerable tenants. Although several tenants were targeted for short periods of time, not one single tenant accepted "move-out" payments, and no one was evicted.

It made leaders out of all of us.

SHARE YOUR STORY!

Alysabeth is only one of many tenants who have stories of how they worked together to assert their rights and stay in their homes. Your story can inspire others! Let us hear it at citistop@gmail.com.