
THE CITISTOP! NEWSLETTER

Issue 2

<http://citistop.live.radicaldesigns.org>

October 2008

Citi Tenants Help Write Proposition M to Fight Back Against Harassment

After the success of the hearing at City Hall (see right column), there was a lot of energy at City Hall and elsewhere to stop CitiApartments and other bully landlords from getting around laws protecting tenants in San Francisco.

As a result of the hearing, CitiSTOP! worked in coalition with the Tenant's Union and other community groups to draft legislation gives us *real tools* to protect ourselves from and fight back against harassment from our landlords.

Yes on M!

Right now, tenants have little recourse to address harassment. We must live through years of abuse before they legally are seen to suffer actual economic, emotional or physical damages that enable them to bring a lawsuit against their landlords. Often, we cannot endure the harassment and leave, which is exactly what landlords like CitiApartments want.

This legislation, Proposition M, adds a section to the rent control law defining and prohibiting harassment of tenants by landlords. It lets tenants get a rent decrease when being harassed. Tenants will be able to address harassment when it begins, not after years of suffering. And the remedy of a rent decrease will be effective, since it addresses the landlords' motivation to harass: getting higher rent.

Prop M is endorsed by the city's tenant and affordable housing organizations, Senior Action Network, the SF Democratic Party, the SF Labor Council, Pride at Work SF, the Harvey Milk Democratic Club, most of the Board of Supervisors and all of our state legislators.

This legislation is now on the ballot November 4th, as Proposition M, and with our work and YES! votes, we will have more tools to keep CitiApartments accountable as a landlord.

CitiApartments Shamed at City Hall Hearing



This May, the CitiSTOP coalition, with over 100 tenants and concerned community members, testified about CitiApartments' tactics of using harassment and intimidation as a way to evict tenants, and asked the Supervisors to do whatever they can to hold Citi accountable.

Tactics of harassment and evictions have enabled the city's largest landlord to raise rent on newly vacant units or convert units to condos, undermining rent control and circumventing the Ellis Act.

"The City needs to take this in the most grave and serious way because ultimately, colleagues, this matter is really about the soul of the city... we need to figure out a way to keep San Franciscans in their homes."

- Supervisor Daly

Supervisors on the Land Use Economic Development Committee listened as tenants spoke for over three hours to about environmental hazards, harassment, and repeated, aggressive buyout offers. All of the supervisors were visibly moved by the compelling testimonies that showed the human face of CitiApartments' illegal business practices.

CitiApartments tenants and members of the CitiSTOP campaign were not the only ones present: CitiApartments

Continued on reverse...

Board of Supervisors hearing continued from front page...

bussed in people paying them \$200 to attend the hearing and wear 'I support CitiApartments t-shirts.

Nonetheless, the Supervisors were not fooled. "Whatever work you are doing I suggest you do a better job of it so that we can resolve this... and I suggest you start doing a better job today." Supervisor Maxwell told the attorney for CitiApartments. "When [tenants] are uncomfortable, we are uncomfortable – and we don't want to be uncomfortable."

THE HEARING WAS ALL OVER THE PRESS!
CHECK OUT ARTICLES FROM THE
EXAMINER, SF BAY GUARDIAN,
BEYOND CHRON, AND OTHER LOCAL
NEWS SOURCES ON OUR WEBSITE, IN THE
PRESS SECTION:

<http://citistop.live.radicaldesigns.org>

Supervisors Peskin and Daly seconded these remarks, with Sup. Daly saying "What we have here is a relatively unprecedented situation where there is a critical mass of tenants at CitiApartments buildings who have similar stories, similar experiences, and this is a significant problem... the City needs to take this in the most grave and serious way."

Save Rent Control! Help Elect Pro-Tenant Supervisors!

Having soundly defeated Prop 98 in June, we've all felt comfortable that rent control is safe. But an equally serious threat looms ahead.

Rent control is simply a local ordinance, not a state law. As such it can be amended or repealed by a simple vote of the Board of Supervisors. A simple 6-5 vote would do it. For many years, tenants have enjoyed a pro-tenant majority on the Board, even if at times a slim majority.

This November, 3 of our consistent tenant-friendly Supervisors are termed out: Jake McGoldrick in District 1, Aaron Peskin in 3 and Gerardo Sandoval in 11. It wouldn't be such a big deal except that these three all represent "swing" districts which include a mixture of tenants and homeowners and high and low incomes and all analysis concludes that these districts (1 is the Richmond, 3 includes Russian Hill, Chinatown & North Beach and 11 is the Excelsior) could easily elect either a pro-tenant or pro-landlord Supervisor in any given year.

When District elections were brought back in 2000, tenants won a clean sweep of these 3 seats. But that was due largely to strong backlash against Willie Brown and his aggressive development policies. There is no similar dynamic this year so these seats are considered wide open. In each of the three, there are 2 candidates-one strongly backed by tenants and one strongly backed by landlords, realtors and developers-who are running first and second in the polls (well ahead of any other candidates) so come November these seats will remain pro-tenants or radically change to pro-landlord.

Losing just one pro-tenant supervisor would be bad, losing two would be very, very bad and losing all three would be disastrous. Legislation like Proposition M would never have gotten on the ballot without supportive supervisors, and without rent control, is suddenly a very minor problem! Unsurprisingly, landlords, realtors and developers have been funneling thousands of dollars into these three districts trying to swing the election their way.

Get involved in these campaigns (even if you don't live in these districts) if you want to keep rent control safe and spread the word about these key races!

D1: **Eric Mar** : 415.505.2961 : <http://ericmar.com>
D3: **David Chiu** : 415.441-8393 : <http://votedavidchiu.org>
D11: **John Avalos** : 415.585-3916 : <http://www.avalos08.com>

NEED HELP?

For counseling about individual issues in your apartment or building, visit the Tenant's Union at 558 Capp Street. Counseling hours can be found online at www.sftu.org or by calling 415-282-6622

GET INVOLVED!

WE NEED: • BUILDING CAPTAINS • HELP PHONE -
BANKING TO OTHER TENANTS • TRANSLATION HELP •
MEDIA WORK • WEBSITE WORK • RESEARCH • YOUR
STORIES **CITISTOP@GMAIL.COM**