



Organizing Times

The Newsletter of CES, the Coalition for Economic Survival

Vol. X, No. 1, Fall/Winter, 2003

CES Leads Effort to End Major Rehab Evictions

CES, with support from other community-based and legal service organizations, has been spearheading an effort to eliminate the Major Rehabilitation eviction provision from the LA City Rent Control ordinance.

Major rehab has been a loophole used by landlords to claim they are making needed repairs, when in reality they have used this provision to evict long-term, low-rent tenants to jack up rents, thus resulting in the displacement of low-income tenants and loss of affordable housing.

CES and the community organizations won a moratorium on major rehab evictions in July, 2002. The City Council has extended the moratorium numerous times, and it is currently in effect, while debate rages over amending the major rehab provision.

The City Council and Mayor appointed a committee to oversee a city-sanctioned study and propose an alternative ordinance. The committee was composed of both tenant and landlord representatives, including CES Executive Director Larry Gross.

The committee arrived at a consensus for a new law that included eliminating the eviction provision, but the landlords have since reneged on their commitment to the proposal.

There has been large turn-out of tenants at the Council Housing and Community Economic Development (HCED) Committee hearings over the last one and a half years to discuss the new Major Rehab ordinance.

Councilmember Ed Reyes has been a leading supporter on the HCED for the committee proposal, together with Councilmember Eric Garcetti, who is the HCED Chair.

The key provisions of the proposed new ordinance include eliminating evictions for Major Rehab, increasing relocation assistance for all no-cause eviction to \$3,200 and \$8,000 for seniors, disabled and families with dependent children, and providing tenants with temporary relocation when the rehabilitation work requires that the unit be vacant.



CES members attend an L.A. City Council hearing to support eliminating major rehab evictions.

HUD Tenants Unite to Preserve Their Affordable Housing

Over the last few months, CES has been assisting L.A. and Orange County Section 8 tenants to organize to preserve their low-income housing.

Tenants at Imperial Villas Apartments in the City of Placentia successfully prevented an opt-out of the Section 8 rent subsidy contract at their building. Tenants were in danger of being displaced when building owners announced that they intended to end the rent subsidy contract on September 30, 2003. CES and the tenants discovered that the owners had not sent the required notices and, therefore, the Section 8 opt-out would be illegal.

Tenants raised objections to the lack of notice before the Placentia City Council. In response, the City Attorney's office contacted the building's management company to inform it of its failure to provide legal notice. Soon after, the building owners announced that they intended to renew the contract for another year.

Tenants in buildings throughout Los Angeles County and surrounding counties have been participating in HUD's Mark-to-Market Program process. This process is intended to preserve subsidized housing for another 30 years. Tenants attended meetings to inform HUD and the owners what improvements should be made in order to keep the



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Echo Park Tenants Fight Evictions and Health Dangers

Tenants at 1168 Bellevue Ave., in Echo Park, have seen numerous government officials and activists come through their building on tours to explain the health dangers that housing code violations present to tenants, particularly young children.

The building has been a centerpiece in a joint Healthy Homes Campaign by CES and the Inner City Law Center (ICLC). The 84-unit building has a large population of families with small children. The dangerous conditions at the building include high levels of lead paint, which present an extreme danger to children. Lead paint results in permanent brain damage to children.

The landlord, who lives in a \$2 million San Mateo house, has responded to tenants' efforts to secure safe and quality housing by attempting to evict 30 families on bogus overcrowding charges. Inner City Law Center is defending the families.

On October 4, tenants, together with CES and ICLC, and with assistance from Councilmember Ed Reyes, organized a



Bellevue children prepare to have their blood tested for lead at a tenant Health Fair in front of their building.

Health Fair in front of the building. The County Health Department provided a mobile unit to conduct blood test sampling for lead poisoning. Eighty eight children were tested.

In addition, the L.A. Housing Department recently placed the building in its Rent Escrow Account Program due to the severe housing code violations. Tenants will receive a rent reduction and be urged to pay rent to the City until repairs are made by the landlord.

Tenants Close Bar and Win Housing Improvements

Tenants at 102 38th St. in South L.A. have won a significant victory to ensure a better quality of life. With CES' assistance, together with the Inner City Law Center, tenants were successful in revoking the permit for a bar on the ground floor of the building. The bar has been the source of noise and housing code violations, as well as creating a threat to tenants lives and property. The bar has been responsible for loud music, fights, drive by shootings, drugs and prostitution into the night and early mornings.

In addition, the L.A. Housing Department had cited the landlord for 150 housing code violations in the 25-unit building.

Tenants testified at Zoning Administration, Police Commission and

L.A. City Council hearings. They received support from Councilmember Jan Perry, who represents the area. Their efforts resulted in the closure of the bar and securing repairs in their apartments.



38th St. Tenants thank supporters with awards at victory celebration.

(Left to right: CES Organizer Roberto Bustillo, Tenant Leader Reyna Gonzalez, LAPD Sr. Lead Officer Pete Torres)

HUD Tenants

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apartments safe and clean. Tenants, with CES' assistance, secured additional money for safety railings on step landings, as well as needed repairs including replacement of leaky roofs, new plumbing pipes and better security.

CES is also organizing tenants in Hollywood around these same issues. While most think of Hollywood as the place of movie stars living in luxury homes, in reality, Hollywood is also home to thousands of Section 8 and low income tenants. On October 21, tenants from 10 different Hollywood Section 8 buildings met. With interpretation provided in Armenian, English, Korean, Russian, and Spanish, tenants strategized on organizing to obtain needed repairs and preserve their affordable housing. A representative from L.A. City Councilmember Eric Garcetti's office attended the meeting and encouraged the tenants to organize and stand up for their rights.

CES Pushes for Code Enforcement Program in West Hollywood

At CES' urging, the City of West Hollywood is considering implementing a Systematic Code Enforcement Program (SCEP) pilot program similar to the one that CES was instrumental in winning in the City of Los Angeles. The program would have the City take a proactive approach to inspecting rental units for housing code violations on a periodic basis.

This program would be extremely important since current statistics show that most West Hollywood tenants are reluctant to report code violations for fear of retaliation and eviction by landlords.

CES has been compiling documentation to support the need for SCEP from cases at its Tenants' Rights Clinic and door-to-door canvassing of tenants.

Tenants Win Historic City Ordinance to Preserve Affordable Housing

CES has been instrumental in bringing attention to the potential loss of HUD housing and other subsidized housing to the City of L.A. As a result, the Mayor and L.A. City Council unanimously adopted a Housing Preservation Ordinance. Hearings, where CES brought affected HUD tenants to testify, led to the ordinance's adoption.

The ordinance will require landlords to provide notice to the City of L.A., similar to federal and state requirements, when owners intend to terminate rent subsidy programs. The ordinance will also provide funds to acquire and preserve at-risk subsidized housing, establish a City Preservation Coordinator, compile lists and monitor at-risk housing and provide funds for education and outreach to tenants at these buildings.

Several cities including San Francisco, Denver, Santa Cruz and Washington D.C. have adopted local preservation ordinances.

During July and August 2003, CES staff, along with owner and management company representatives, legal services attorneys, non-profit housing organizations, the Housing Department, Housing Authority and City Attorney, participated in meetings of a Working Group established by the City Council to develop the details of the proposed new noticing ordinance.

The ordinance came about as the direct result of CES' organizing efforts at three complexes where the owners failed to comply with the state notice requirements.

CES was successful in convincing the City of L.A. to file lawsuits to prevent the illegal Section 8 opt outs. The buildings were One Venice Apts. (Venice), Arminta North and South (Sun Valley) and L.A. Pro 6 (several sites throughout South L.A.).

The particulars of the proposed Preservation Ordinance are currently being finalized for City Council approval.

CES Awarded City Contract to Address Slum Housing

The City of L.A. recently awarded CES and four other groups a contract to provide outreach to tenants living in slum buildings that are subject to the Rent Escrow Account Program (REAP), Utility Maintenance Program (UMP) and Urgent Repair Program (URP).

When a building is in REAP, tenants get a rent reduction and are urged to pay rent to the city until the landlord makes the needed repairs.

UMP addresses cases where the landlord has not paid the water or electricity and service is threatened to be shut off.

URP is used when the owner refuses to make repairs to conditions which are life threatening and the City steps in to make sure repairs are made and the landlord is then charged.

Under the contract, CES will conduct outreach to tenants to educate them on their rights, encourage them to participate in these programs and verify that the repairs are made.

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Organizing Times is the newsletter of the Coalition for Economic Survival (CES), a grassroots community organization, founded in 1973 for the purpose of uniting people throughout the Los Angeles area to fight for economic and social justice. CES is committed to actively opposing any type of prejudice or discrimination based on race, gender, ethnicity, age, religion, income, disability or sexual orientation.

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New Faces at CES

CES has been fortunate to add 5 new organizers to our staff in the past year. (Bottom row, left to right):

Yuisa Gimeno: HUD Tenant Organizer, Lourdes Soto: REAP (Rent Escrow Account Program) Outreach Organizer. (Back row, left to right): Jessica Wedge: HUD Tenant Organizer, Agassi Topchian: West Hollywood Community Organizer, Roberto Bustillo: Tenant Organizer. They join Franklin Campos: HUD Tenant Outreach and Organizing Coordinator, Tony Morales: REAP Outreach Coordinator and Larry Gross: Executive Director.

CES Tenants' Rights Clinic

CES offers individual counseling on your legal rights as a tenant. Eviction? Rent Increase? Repairs needed? CES has answers for you.

Wednesday Evenings
7:00 pm
&
Saturday Mornings
10:00 am

Plummer Park
(in the community building)
7377 Santa Monica Bl.
(between Fairfax & La Brea)

Coalition for Economic Survival

1296 N. Fairfax Ave.
Los Angeles, California 90046

Address correction requested
TIME DATED MATERIAL

This newsletter is also available in Spanish and Russian.
Este boletín está disponible en español.
Это издание также публикуется на русском языке.

Now is the time to...

Join the Coalition for Economic Survival

CES has a proven track record

For over two decades, CES has organized people throughout the Los Angeles area, and has achieved an impressive record in fighting and winning many battles. In its 30-year history, CES:

- Led the fight to win rent control in Los Angeles and West Hollywood, and has been the premier "watchdog" protecting and strengthening rent control since its adoption.
- Was the driving force to incorporate the City of West Hollywood and has elected 20 out of 24 CES endorsed candidates to the West Hollywood City Council since 1984.
- Secured hundreds of government-funded affordable housing units for tenants being displaced.
- Organized thousands of tenants in private and HUD-subsidized buildings into tenant unions to stop rent increases and evictions, and to force landlords to make needed repairs.

These accomplishments, along with many others, have made CES one of L.A.'s most dynamic and effective grassroots community organizations.

Join CES!

It's only through the support of CES members that we can establish the people-power needed to bring about new victories. Become a part of and help add to this impressive record of victories. Fill in the coupon on this page and join CES. You'll receive regular mailings, invitations to events, free tenants' rights counseling, discounted legal services and discounted car rentals.

Become a CES sustainer

Help ensure CES' financial health by becoming a Sustainer. Sustainers contribute an amount, whatever one can afford, monthly or quarterly. Special monthly action updates with payment reminders are sent to Sustainers. Just check the Sustainers box below and help give CES a more secure financial future.



YES! I want CES to continue to fight for my economic rights!

Enclosed are my membership dues in the amount of:

- \$15 Regular \$25 Supporting (includes t-shirt)
 \$50 Contributing \$100 Donor \$10 Fixed Income

CES helps me; I'd like to help CES by becoming a Sustainer. I pledge \$_____ Monthly Quarterly

Name _____
Address _____
City, State, Zip _____
Phone: day: (____) _____ eve: (____) _____
Email _____

Clip and mail to: CES, 1296 N. Fairfax Ave., LA, CA 90046