



TENANTS TOGETHER
California's Statewide Organization
for Renters' Rights
www.tenantsaltogether.org

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A Union at Work... **and a Union at Home**

Support tenants' right to organize

The problem

Since 2008, California's rental housing market has experienced dramatic consolidation into fewer and larger hands and increased speculation by national and international investors. Tenants are increasingly likely to deal with a corporation as their landlord. An individual tenant's ability to request repairs, negotiate rent adjustments, and ultimately engage on equal terms has diminished. Tenants lack bargaining power and are vulnerable to abuse, neglect and mistreatment at the hands of their landlords. Tenants who organize are regularly evicted without cause.

In the labor market, we recognize that workers must have the right to organize to even the unequal playing field between a single worker and the consolidated power of the company. This inequality of bargaining power spurred the right to organize for workers. It is time to recognize that an inequality of bargaining power exists between tenants and landlords, regardless of the building size or type of owner, and we need to do something about it.

Our solution

Tenants Together proposes that California Civil Code include a codified right. Tenants living in housing owned and/or managed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development won the right to organize in 2000. We need to ensure strong organizing rights exist for all tenants.



Betty Galbadon, a Tenants Together member in the city of Concord, lived in her home for eight years with her young daughter. A few months ago, Betty received a 60-day notice of termination of tenancy following her efforts to organize her building and form a tenant association to improve living conditions. The notice stated no reason for the eviction, as allowed under California law. They were forced to leave their home and move to a new city. **Betty was evicted for organizing**, plain and simple.

Our proposal states that any tenant who forms or joins a tenant association shall have the following rights:

- **Just Cause:** No eviction of the tenants in the tenant association except for cause.
- **Right to Strike:** A right to engage in rent strike – landlord must bargain in good faith about grievances and may not evict for nonpayment during the negotiation period.
- **Enhanced Penalties:** Statutory penalty of five times current penalties for retaliation or violation of this law, and in no event less than \$1,000.

Much like a worker's union contract provides protection from at-will employment and provides the right to withhold one's labor when disputes are not settled, a tenant's right to organize should provide protection from no-cause evictions — rampant across California where most cities don't have just-cause eviction protections — and the right to withhold rent when poor living conditions and harassment persist.

We have long recognized the inequality of bargaining power in labor-employer relationships. Now more than ever, as regional, national, and international investment firms buy up larger shares of the multi-family and single-family rental housing markets, tenants need the right to organize to level the playing field. Tenants Together requests your support for this crucial bill.



Betty and her daughter



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