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TWO TENANT UNIONS IN FEDERALLY-BACKED BUILDINGS AUTHORIZE RENT STRIKES, PART OF COORDINATED NATIONAL CAMPAIGN

KANSAS CITY, MO – Founding Tenant Union Federation member, KC Tenants, **is preparing for its first ever rent strikes. Last night, the Independence Towers Tenant Union and the Quality Hill Towers Tenant Union, two building unions with federally-financed loans, voted to authorize strikes to launch on October 1.** The unions are demanding national rent caps, new ownership, collectively bargained leases, and more.

These rent strikes are the first in Tenant Union Federation and KC Tenants history, the first coordinated strikes in decades, and the first-ever strikes to target the Federal Housing Finance Authority (FHFA), the Fannie Mae/Freddie Mac regulator.

*"The rent is too damn high. The question is not whether tenants will revolt, but whether it will be from a place of desperation or from a place of power. Rent strikes, high-stakes escalations that are not taken lightly, wield tenants' ultimate power: our rent checks. Every first of the month presents another opportunity for tenants to strike, and tenants are preparing to do so in federally-financed properties across the country. Our unified demand for the federal regulator, the Federal Housing Finance Agency, is for national rent caps. The escalation will continue until we win," said **Tara Raghuv eer, director of the Tenant Union Federation.***

These tenant unions, supported by the Tenant Union Federation and KC Tenants, are part of a coordinated national effort, targeting properties with federally-backed loans. The Kansas City-area unions are the first to authorize strikes, but **tenants are organizing towards similar escalation in North Carolina, South Carolina, Michigan, Montana, Kentucky, and Illinois.** Across geography, the tenants' unifying demand is for national rent caps.

Independence Towers, a union including 65% of 63 occupied units, and Quality Hill Towers, a union including 63% of the 234 occupied units, authorized strikes after weeks-long strike drives, lengthy deliberation, silent ballots, and consensus decisions from their elected bargaining teams. Together, the unions are ready to withhold over \$60,000 from their landlords in October.

RENT STRIKES

A rent strike is an organized, collective action wherein tenants withhold their rent payments as a tactic to escalate on the target, typically the landlord or another entity that relies on their rent, in order to win a set of demands. Strikes are high-stakes actions that come at the end of a long arc of engagement.

Strike authorization has involved an intense strike drive, including organizing hundreds of tenants onto commitment cards. Last night, both unions held their weekly meetings, union members cast silent ballots, and the elected bargaining teams finalized the decision by reaching consensus to authorize the strike.

As with labor strikes, authorization does not necessarily mean that the strikes will launch on October 1. Both unions will make their authorizations public this morning. The targets have until close of business Monday to come to the negotiation table and meet the union's demands. Barring that, the tenants are prepared to strike come Tuesday.

BUILDING BACKGROUND

In both strike-authorized properties, the tenants have issued clear demands and attempted to negotiate with their landlords and FHFA. Both properties have Fannie Mae-backed loans.

Quality Hill Towers is owned by Sentinel Real Estate Corporation. Sentinel received a \$9 million loan backed by Fannie Mae to finance their purchase of the Towers in YEAR. In 2023 operating statements, Sentinel reported spending \$907,000 on payroll and marketing while spending only \$234,000 on maintenance. For years, tenants at the property have endured burst pipes, unresolved sewage backup, pest infestations, months without responses to maintenance requests, eviction threats, retaliation, and rent hikes. Sentinel is one of the biggest evictors in the city.

After nearly two years of organizing, the Quality Hill Towers Tenant Union launched publicly on September 5. Now the union has 148 members, making it the biggest building union in the region.

Independence Towers was owned by Parker Webb, who received a \$5.5 million loan backed by Fannie Mae to purchase the building in 2021. After Webb and his company failed to maintain the conditions of the property, Fannie Mae sued in February. In late May, Judge Charles McKenzie (16th Circuit, Division 13) appointed Trigild Inc. to act as the "receiver" of the property. Since that time, Trigild has failed to make urgent and necessary repairs. Tenants met with Trigild Vice President Nancy Daniels in June; she has not communicated with the union since. Tenants' have received no communication from Trigild, even after a child fell from an eighth story window and died.

Independence Towers launched publicly on May 2 after losing hot water for two weeks. Now the union has 40 members.

On May 28, both buildings sent representatives to a meeting with the FHFA Director Sandra Thompson and top executives from Fannie Mae, sharing their stories and seeking commitments for action on their properties and for national rent caps in federally-financed properties. The Director made no satisfactory commitments in that meeting.

NEXT STEPS

If the strike launches on October 1, both unions will hold rallies that morning, Quality Hills at 9 AM and Independence Towers at 10 AM.

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The [Tenant Union Federation](#) is a union of unions, organizing tenants to wield power at a massive scale, to bargain for tenant protections, to disrupt the flow of capital to those who commodify our homes, to

secure alternatives to the current housing market, to guarantee housing as a public good, and to establish tenants as a political class that cannot be ignored.