



MASS LAWSUIT FILED AGAINST SIX LA LANDLORDS TO PREVENT PRICE GOUGING IN THE WAKE OF THE PALISADES AND EATON FIRES

For Immediate Release

LOS ANGELES, CA – FEBRUARY 24, 2025 – Following two of the most destructive wildfires in California history, in which thousands of people lost their homes, tenant advocates have joined forces to file a lawsuit against six LA-based landlords and agents accused of illegally raising rents to exploit displaced residents.

Filed on February 21, 2025, the lawsuit aims to enforce compliance with California Penal Code § 396, which bans extreme price increases on housing and essential needs following state-declared emergencies. The case, based on violations of the California’s Unfair Competition Law, was brought by community-based tenant organization **Strategic Actions for a Just Economy (“SAJE”)**, represented by the **Housing Rights Center, Western Center on Law & Poverty, Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles, and California Center for Movement Legal Services**. It is the first private action filed by legal non-profits against illegal rent gouging since the fires began.

The defendants—owners, leasing agents, and property managers—are accused of raising rents by 25% to nearly 50% in direct violation of anti-price-gouging laws, which limit rent increases to 10% following a natural disaster. The defendants were identified by a spreadsheet that tracks exploitative rent gouging, created by SAJE’s Director of Policy and Advocacy, and the Rent Brigade, a grassroots collective. The price-gouging ban remains in effect in Los Angeles County until January 7, 2026.

“These wildfires have devastated communities, destroyed homes, and taken loved ones. Their impact extends far beyond Pacific Palisades and Altadena—every neighborhood in Los Angeles and Ventura Counties may face higher housing costs for years to come as a result of these fires,” said **Rodney Leggett, Litigation Director at the Housing Rights Center**. “Some landlords and agents have chosen to take advantage of vulnerable people in the wake of this tragedy by price gouging. This case should serve as a warning that our organizations will always act to protect renters and homeowners from economic exploitation.”

Before filing the lawsuit, attorneys sent 98 legal demand letters to landlords and property managers appearing to gouge rents, urging them to rescind unlawful rent increases and reset rental prices to a lawful amount by February 4, 2025. The threat of legal action has already led some landlords to remove price gouged listings or lower rents to the appropriate rental listing, but many continue to violate the law.

“These unlawful rent hikes are making it even more difficult for families displaced by this disaster to find housing in one of the least affordable metropolitan areas in the United States,” said **Madeline Howard, Senior Staff Attorney with Western Center**. “By bringing this case, we hope that other landlords will see that greed does not pay and that they must comply with anti-price gouging protections. Protecting renters’ rights, particularly in the face of disasters when they’re most vulnerable, is the right thing to do and what the law requires.”



With only a portion of the potential rent gouging infractions recorded to date, the magnitude of the issue is far larger than this complaint.

“Our investigations into reports of rampant price gouging across Los Angeles found that hundreds of properties have seen rents increase more than 10% since the Palisades and Eaton fires,” said **Chelsea Kirk, Director of Policy and Research at SAJE.**

An estimated 16,000 homes were destroyed by the Palisades and Eaton fires, and many more have been rendered uninhabitable. According to a Washington Post study, average rents in Los Angeles County surged by 20% in the weeks after the fires, with some neighborhoods seeing spikes as high as 130%. A separate study by the Rent Brigade estimates that landlords have overcharged tenants by more than \$7 million per month since the fires began.

"Rent gouging is not just illegal; it's devastating, and it hinders our region's recovery from this historic tragedy. The worst harm will come to low-income families, who are already bearing the brunt of our extreme housing crisis," said **Heeyoung Linda Park, attorney with the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles.** "We are proud to help Los Angeles fight back against unlawful and unethical exploitation."

[Read the complaint HERE.](#)

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[Strategic Actions for a Just Economy \(SAJE\)](#) builds community power and leadership for economic justice, with a vision for society where everyone has access to green space, reliable and safe transit, economic security, and healthy, secure and affordable housing, and where the elements of the built environment necessary to survival are publicly supported infrastructure and not commodities.

[Housing Rights Center \(HRC\)](#) is one of the nation's largest and oldest non-profit civil rights organizations dedicated to securing and promoting Fair Housing. HRC actively supports and promotes freedom of residence through education, advocacy, and litigation, to the end that all persons have the opportunity to secure the housing they desire and can afford, without regard to their race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, gender, sexual orientation, familial status, marital status, disability, age, veteran status, source of income or other characteristics protected by law.

[Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles \(LAFLA\)](#) is a nonprofit law firm that seeks to achieve equal justice for people living in poverty across Greater Los Angeles. LAFLA changes lives through direct representation, systems change, and community empowerment. It has five offices in Los Angeles County, along with four Self-Help Legal Access Centers at area courthouses, and three domestic violence clinics to aid survivors.



[Western Center on Law & Poverty](#) fights in courts, cities, counties, and in the Capitol to secure housing, health care, and a strong safety net for Californians with low incomes, through the lens of economic and racial justice.

[California Center for Movement Legal Services](#) works to improve the lives of California's traditionally underserved community members, through impact litigation, robust eviction defense, and community led policy creation, implementation and enforcement.

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