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BREAKING NEWS/UPDATES

Updated at 1:03 p.m., Thursday, December 18, 2008

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Suit accuses housing authority of 'hazardous conditions'

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Advertiser Staff

A class-action lawsuit was filed today against the Hawai'i Public Housing Authority alleging "hazardous conditions" and "discriminatory obstacles" at Kuhio Park Terrace and Kuhio Homes in Kalihi, two of the largest and oldest public housing properties in the state.



Victor Geminiani, of Lawyers for Equal Justice, speaks to the news media about a class-action lawsuit filed today against the Hawai'i Public Housing Authority alleging "hazardous conditions" and "discriminatory obstacles" at Kuhio Park Terrace and Kuhio Homes in Kalihi, two of the largest and oldest public housing complexes in the state.

GREGORY YAMAMOTO | The Honolulu Advertiser

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Six tenants joined the lawsuit, filed by Lawyers for Equal Justice and several private attorneys.

The class-action alleges:

- "The air at KPT is filled with hazardous particulates," including soot dust from frequent trash fires, roach dust and rat allergens. "Added to these toxins," the suit says, "are the effects of leaking and burst pipes, and plumbing backups, causing brown wastewater to fill housing units."
- The public housing authority is not following federal inspection and maintenance standards at KPT and Kuhio Homes.

- The agency has failed to ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- KPT has nonfunctioning and "dangerous" elevators that impede mobility for the disabled and elderly.
- KPT has no fire evacuation plan and has had persistent fire code violations. "It's tragic today that we find the state the largest slum landlord that we have," said Victor Geminiani, executive director of Lawyers for Equal Justice, in a news conference this morning.

The class-action suit is seeking an unspecified amount of damages and a court order to mandate that conditions at KPT and Kuhio Homes be improved.

The housing authority has not yet responded to the lawsuit.

In addition to the class-action filed today, Lawyers for Equal Justice also filed a state complaint that seeks rent rebates for KPT tenants based on "squalid, unsafe and unsanitary" conditions at

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the housing project.

KPT has 614 units in two 16-floor towers.

Kuhio Homes, a low-rise complex, has 134 units.

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JonathanL wrote:

Replying to Maukaman:

On Lingle's watch, well is true that the problems at HHA now know as the Hawaii Public Housing Authority date back to before Lingle's admionistration, but she has been in office for six years now and the problems have persisted. I think after six years its safe to say its Lingle's problem that she has failed to address.

Anyone recall how she went after the former administrator from the Cayetano Administration for her "incompetence?" More so, her Republican cronies (Miike Liu) from Washington, D.C (DHUD) pounced on her. Well, this governor has been in office for six plus years and the problems are now even worst than she found it back then. It was then all political shibai and that b.s. continues even till this day.
12/18/2008 12:24:55 p.m.

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Maukaman wrote:

On Lingle's watch, well is true that the problems at HHA now know as the Hawaii Public Housing Authority date back to before Lingle's admionistration, but she has been in office for six years now and the problems have persisted. I think after six years its safe to say its Lingle's problem that she has failed to address.
12/18/2008 12:16:58 p.m.

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whatisnotsaid wrote:

This is an ongoing problem in terms of Fair Housing and all of the states projects. Hasn't anyone wondered why Mufi has wanted to get out of the housing business. All of the states housing projects do not meet the standards for number of units that are required to be accessible for people with disabilities. Its about time the someone made the landlords in the state live up to the fair housing act. GOOD JOB! Now lets see how many of the "accessible" units are in good repair and how many are occupied by people with disabilities....
12/18/2008 12:09:26 p.m.

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KimoMakano wrote:

Replying to PeterC39:

Lingle Administration: "What goes around comes around."

So you think this only happened on Lingle's watch??
12/18/2008 12:00:22 p.m.

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megook wrote:

good for them. affordable but dignified housing for those in need!
12/18/2008 11:15:26 a.m.

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