

# **Tens of thousands face eviction, social misery in Missouri with lifting of moratorium**

**Cole Michaels**  
**19 September 2021**

The expiry of the US federal eviction moratorium will affect great numbers of people. According to the US Census Bureau, the number of adult renters behind on their rent at the end of August stood at more than 10 million, about 1 in 7 renters. The Census Bureau's weekly Household Pulse Survey for the week ending August 26 found that 3.5 million respondents were facing the "likelihood" of eviction in the next two months.

Moreover, the ending of the national moratorium has led cities to end their own local restrictions. Localities in the state of Missouri are no exception.

The eviction ban in St. Louis, the second largest city in the state, has now been lifted. The city says it will offer temporary clinics to help those who cannot afford rent. Mayor Tishaura Jones, a Democrat, stated that, as of the end of August, 200 people have received help from these clinics. As of mid-August, there were 3,000 pending eviction court cases in the city of St. Louis alone. There were a combined 13,000 pending eviction cases for the metropolitan areas of St. Louis and Kansas City, Missouri's largest city.

Local housing advocates tell of their clients experiencing panic attacks due to the slow disbursement of federal relief funding. According to St. Louis Public Radio, the city of St. Louis has distributed \$2.2 million in assistance out of an allotment of \$8 million. St. Louis County has distributed \$8.4 million out of a total of \$26.6 million. Any money not distributed by September 30 will be returned to the federal government.

Robert Swearingen, an attorney for St. Louis-based Legal Services of Eastern Missouri, told the Associated Press, "My clientele is really low income, so I'm dealing with people living on Social Security between \$600 and \$1,000 a month, and they have a hard time

finding an apartment that is livable." Kennard Williams of Action St. Louis warned that evictees have trouble finding new housing. "The eviction wave is going to overwhelm the resources and infrastructure that we have," he said. "A lot of people don't have a plan, and with the way evictions work, once you have an eviction on your record, a lot of landlords will bar you from living on their property."

The lifting of the eviction ban will further contribute to the social misery of wide layers of the population in Missouri, a process assisted by the political establishment.

The additional \$300 weekly pandemic-related federal unemployment benefit was rejected in Missouri in June by Governor Mike Parson. Cole County Circuit Court Judge Jon Beetem affirmed Parson's decision, denying the reinstatement or back-payment of the benefits on August 31.

"Instead of being comfortable where we should have been, now we're struggling to keep our head above water," Kimberly Newby-Dorsey of Kearney, near Kansas City, told KSHB. She has been unemployed since the beginning of the pandemic. Newby-Dorsey recounted how she recently received a shutoff notice from her water company: "Not only can I not pay it, but I'm negative almost \$40 in my bank account because I had to fill up my car with gas so I could take my son with a broken leg to his doctor appointments weekly."

Despite the cutoff of federal benefits, small businesses and larger firms alike in Missouri are having trouble filling positions. This is attributed to fears of COVID-19 in the workplace, as well as the poverty wages. On August 20, KMOV News reported that many childcare centers in the St. Louis area are having trouble finding new staff. Faith Academy Executive Director Kristin Skebo told KMOV, "This can be a

very rewarding job but it's no secret that it's a difficult job and the way that the job market is, people have a lot of choices." Some parents are being put on waitlists for their children to be accepted into these facilities. Holly Fantasia Shadows, mother of an infant boy, said, "It's been really difficult trying to find any kind of childcare, I sat on my lunch last week crying, calling. I think I called 17 daycares before I found somebody."

Missouri Jobs with Justice (MOJwJ), who unsuccessfully sued the state of Missouri to get back-pay for workers affected by the early cutoff of pandemic benefits, reiterated that much of the current unemployment crisis comes from people avoiding jobs that would expose them to COVID. "There are people who have health conditions, either their own or their immediate family, that make returning to work dangerous," said MOJwJ Policy Director Richard von Glahn.

In regard to Governor Parson's claim that ending the benefits was an incentive for the unemployed to find work, von Glahn added, "This is not about supporting families getting back to work, getting the economy back going again, you don't block money from your economy if that's what you're trying to do." Despite many businesses suffering from a lack of employees, even if the homeless take these jobs, poverty wages mean they will still be unable to afford housing, food and other expenses.

The pandemic has undercut the ability of organizations and individuals to serve homeless people. KSHB published a story on the efforts to assist a group of unhoused people at the Sterling Avenue underpass underneath a stretch of Interstate 70 in Kansas City. Teri Glor, one of the people living at the underpass, said, "It was either I hit the streets or my nephews hit the streets and I didn't want them on the street. It's real difficult, people look at you weird, they think they're better than you and you explain to them that everybody has a story." She has been homeless off and on for the past 11 years.

Springfield-based nonprofit Community Partnership of the Ozarks released data revealing that there are 750 individuals and 440 households currently homeless in Springfield, out of a population of 168,000.

According to KMOV, a downtown St. Louis City homeless encampment at Interco Plaza was torn down September 3. About 50 people were living at the camp

when Mayor Jones said it was being shut down due to "safety issues." A fatal shooting occurred August 29, though it was not blamed on the camp residents.

The former residents were shuttled to nearby shelters, but their troubles will continue until they are provided with permanent and affordable housing. The camp residents fear the bonds they've formed with each other will be broken with the razing of the camp. "This is my family, man, we're family here, for real, this is all we got," said Antoine Hunt, who lived at the encampment for six weeks. "We don't want people coming in here and pulling us apart."



To contact the WSWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**