

Legal Issues News from PR Newswire

Justice Department Files Fair Housing Lawsuit in South Dakota

WASHINGTON, Nov. 5 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- The Justice Department announced today that it has sued the owners and managers of three Sioux Falls, S.D., apartment buildings, alleging that they violated the Fair Housing Act when they refused to rent apartments to families with children, and when they told tenants and prospective tenants that they did not rent to African-Americans.

The suit, filed on Nov. 4, 2008, in the U.S. District Court for South Dakota, alleges that Phyllis and Richard Rogers, the owners of three buildings encompassing 28 units in Sioux Falls, refused to rent to families with children and stated this policy to tenants on numerous occasions. The suit further alleges that Phyllis Rogers informed tenants and prospective tenants that she did not rent to African-Americans. The suit also names as a defendant Triple R. Industries, Inc., the management company controlled by the Rogerses that manages the buildings.

This lawsuit arose as a result of complaints filed with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) by Fair Housing of the Dakotas, a fair housing organization, and a tenant, who Phyllis Rogers told she did not rent to families with children or African-Americans. After an investigation of the complaint, HUD issued a charge of discrimination, and after complainants elected to have the case heard in federal court, the case was referred to the Department of Justice. The suit also alleges that defendants' policy of prohibiting families with children from living in the buildings constitutes a pattern or practice of discrimination and denies rights to a group of persons. The suit seeks a court order prohibiting future discrimination by the defendants, monetary damages for those harmed by the defendants' actions and a civil penalty.

The federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability and familial status. Since Jan. 1, 2001, the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division has filed 275 cases to enforce the Fair Housing Act, 80 of which have alleged discrimination based on race, and 56 of which have alleged discrimination based on familial status. More information about the Civil Rights Division and the laws it enforces is available at <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt>. Individuals who believe that they may have been victims of housing discrimination can call the Housing Discrimination Tip Line at 1-800-896-7743, e-mail the Justice Department at fairhousing@usdoj.gov, or contact the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development at 1-800-669-9777.