



Department of Justice

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JUSTICE DEPARTMENT SETTLES HOUSING DISCRIMINATION LAWSUIT WITH PENNSYLVANIA APARTMENT COMPLEXES

WASHINGTON - The Justice Department today filed a consent order resolving a lawsuit which has alleged that the owners, developers, builders, architects and engineers of six apartment complexes in Montgomery County, Pa., discriminated against persons with disabilities in designing and constructing the housing. The complexes are Abram's Run Apartments and Henderson Square Apartments I and II in King of Prussia, Fox Ridge Apartments and Fox Ridge Lakeside Apartments in Limerick, and Lakeview Apartments in Royerstown.

"Those who design and construct housing units may not ignore their obligation to make them accessible to persons with disabilities," said Wan J. Kim, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. "The Justice Department will continue its vigorous enforcement of all the fair housing laws."

"It is our job to ensure that Americans are not discriminated against because of disability," said Patrick L. Meehan, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. "When developers, architects and engineers take money-saving shortcuts around the law, individuals with disabilities suffer. This settlement both corrects past violations and ensures future compliance."

The lawsuit, filed March 31, 2006, in the U.S. District Court in Philadelphia, alleges that developer Gambone Brothers Development Company; builders Gambone Construction Company and Gambone Brothers Organization Inc.; owners and developers Abram's Run Apartments Associates L.P., Fox Ridge Apartments L.P., Lakeside Inn Acquisition L.P., Lewis Road Apartments L.P., Henderson Square Apartments L.P., and Henderson Square Phase 2 L.P.; architects Joseph A. Zadlo and Mike Rosen Architects, P.C., and engineers Chambers Associates Inc., and Urwiler & Walter Inc., violated the Fair Housing Act by designing and constructing the 300 ground-floor apartments at the complexes without mandatory features that permit access by persons with disabilities. The lawsuit further alleges that the owners and developers violated the Americans with Disabilities Act by designing and constructing inaccessible rental offices.

The consent order, which requires court approval, provides for extensive retrofitting of the complexes, including widening doorways, removing steps and adding new accessible sidewalks and curb ramps, replacing round door knobs with lever hardware, moving light switches and thermostats to accessible heights, and reconfiguring kitchens and bathrooms. Accessible features also must be added to the rental offices. The consent order also requires the owners and developers to establish a \$307,000 fund to compensate persons aggrieved by inaccessibility at the complexes, pay a \$25,000 civil penalty, and provide for training and monitoring of all defendants.

Persons with disabilities who believe they may have been harmed by inaccessibility at Abram's Run Apartments, Henderson Square Apartments I and II, Fox Ridge Apartments, Fox Ridge Lakeside Apartments, or Lakeview Apartments should call 1-800-896-7743, ext. 7 or go to <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/housing/notices.htm> to determine how they can file a claim for monetary damages.

Fighting illegal housing discrimination is a top priority of the Justice Department. In February 2006, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales announced Operation Home Sweet Home, a concentrated initiative to expose and eliminate housing discrimination in America. This initiative was inspired by the plight of displaced victims of Hurricane Katrina who were suddenly forced to find new places to live. Operation Home Sweet Home is not limited to the areas hit by Hurricane Katrina and targets housing discrimination all over the country. More information about Operation Home Sweet Home is available at the Justice Department Web site at <http://www.usdoj.gov/fairhousing>. Individuals who believe that they may have been victims of housing discrimination can call the Housing Discrimination Tip Line at 1-800-896-7743, email the Justice Department at fairhousing@usdoj.gov, or contact the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development at 1-800-669-9777.

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 222 cases to enforce the Fair Housing Act, 100 of which have alleged discrimination based on disability. More information about the Civil Rights Division and the laws it enforces is available at <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt>.

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