



Department of Justice

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JUSTICE DEPARTMENT SUES CINCINNATI LANDLORD FOR SEXUAL HARASSMENT

WASHINGTON — The Justice Department today filed a lawsuit against James G. Mitchell, the owner and operator of several rental properties in the Cincinnati, Ohio, metropolitan area, alleging a pattern or practice of sexual harassment of female tenants.

The complaint, filed today in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Ohio, alleges that Mitchell subjected female tenants to unwanted verbal sexual advances and unwanted sexual touching, entered the apartments of female tenants without permission or notice, granted and denied tangible housing benefits based on sex, and took adverse action against female tenants when they refused or objected to his sexual advances.

“No woman should be subjected to sexual harassment in her home,” said Wan J. Kim, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. “Landlords should be on notice that the Justice Department will continue to vigorously enforce the federal fair housing laws.”

The suit seeks monetary damages to compensate the victims, civil penalties, and a court order barring future discrimination.

Fighting illegal housing discrimination is a top priority of the Justice Department. The Department has filed 217 cases alleging violations of the Fair Housing Act since Jan. 1, 2001, including 24 cases alleging sex discrimination. Furthermore, since Jan. 21, 2001, the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division has filed 15 cases alleging a pattern or practice of sexual harassment by landlords, which is three times as many as the number filed in the preceding six years. 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.

For more information about Operation Home Sweet Home, please visit the Justice Department Web site, <http://www.usdoj.gov/fairhousing>. The federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, familial status, national origin and disability. 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 Department at fairhousing@usdoj.gov, or contact the Department of Housing and Urban Development at 1-800-669-9777. More information about the Civil Rights Division and the laws it enforces can be found at <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt>.