

North Dakota Fair Housing Council

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BISMARCK TOWN HALL MEETING SCHEDULED

The second in a series of Mayor's Town Hall Meetings to advance diversity and eliminate discrimination will be held in Bismarck the evening of July 21, 2004 at the Best Western Doublewood Inn. The Mayor's Committee on Human Relations and the North Dakota Fair Housing Council will be hosting the meeting. The meeting will focus on race and national origin discrimination and will build upon the previous April Town Hall Meeting in which 335 participants were in attendance. Tentative plans include a third Town Hall Meeting on disability issues later this fall/winter depending upon funding.

The mission of the Mayor's Committee on Human Relations is to protect and promote the personal dignity of all Bismarck citizens and eliminate any discriminatory barriers that prevent them from reaching their full

human potential. The Committee seeks to make education and compliance a meaningful and visible strategy as it works to recognize the value of a diverse community. The mission of the North Dakota Fair Housing Council is to provide support, encouragement and assistance to those seeking equal access to housing in North and South Dakota.

Endorsers for the event are being sought. No financial commitment is necessary; endorsers need only acknowledge their support of the event and commitment to advancing diversity. There will be no charge for this event, but registration is required. Registration materials are available at www.ndfhc.org/HRC.htm or by contacting the NDFHC at 1-888-265-0907 or 701-221-2530.

UPCOMING MEETINGS OF INTEREST

Upcoming meetings of interest:

August 5, 2004: North Dakota Immigrant Access Forum at the Holiday Inn in Fargo, ND. For more info, contact Anna Spradlin at 303-844-7902.

November 5-6, 2004: North Dakota Human Rights Coalition 2nd Annual Conference. "Human Rights: The Economic Impact of Discrimination." Location: Best Western Ramkota Hotel, 800 South Third Street, Bismarck, ND 58504. For more info, visit www.ndhrc.org

HUD-DOJ JOINT MEMO ON REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

The Department of Justice ("DOJ") and the Department of Housing and Urban Development ("HUD") are jointly responsible for enforcing the federal Fair Housing Act (the "Act"), which prohibits discrimination in housing on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, familial status, and disability. One type of disability discrimination prohibited by the Act is the refusal to make reasonable accommodations in rules, policies, practices, or services when such accommodations may be necessary to afford a person with a disability the equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling. HUD and DOJ frequently respond to complaints alleging that housing providers have violated the Act by refusing reasonable accommodations to persons with disabilities. This Statement provides technical assistance regarding the rights and obligations of persons with disabilities and housing providers under the Act relating to reasonable accommodations.

The full memo may be viewed at HUD's web site at: <http://www.hud.gov/utilities/intercept.cfm?offices/ftheo/library/hud DOJ statement.pdf> or on the NDFHC's web site at: http://www.ndfhc.org/fair_housing/index.htm under publications.

INITIATIVE TO COMBAT POST-9/11 DISCRIMINATORY BACKLASH

US Department of Justice-
Division of Civil Rights: The
Assistant Attorney General
for Civil Rights has directed
the Civil Rights Division's
National Origin Working
Group to work proactively to
combat violations of civil
rights laws against Arab,
Muslim, Sikh, and South-
Asian Americans, and those
perceived to be members of
these groups, through the
creation of the Initiative to
Combat Post-9/11
Discriminatory Backlash.

Since the terrorist attacks
of September 11, 2001,
members of these groups,
and those perceived to be
members of these groups,
have been the victims of
increased numbers of bias-
related assaults, threats,
vandalism and arson.

Reducing the incidence of
such attacks, and ensuring
that the perpetrators are
brought to justice, is a Civil
Rights Division priority. The
Division also has placed a
priority on cases involving
discrimination against Arab,
Sikh, Muslim, and South-
Asian Americans in
employment, housing,
education, access to public
accommodations and
facilities, and other areas
within the Civil Rights
Division's jurisdiction.

The Initiative is combating
bias crimes and
discrimination by:

Ensuring that there are
efficient and accessible
processes in place for
individuals to report violations
to the Civil Rights Division,
and to make sure that these
cases are handled
expeditiously.

Implementing proactive
measures to identify cases
involving bias crimes and
discrimination being
prosecuted at the State level
that may merit Federal action.

Conducting outreach to
affected communities to
provide them with information
about how to file complaints
and the resources available
through the Department of
Justice and other Federal
agencies to protect their civil
rights.

Working with other
Department of Justice
components and other
government agencies to
ensure accurate referral,
effective outreach, and
comprehensive provision of
services to victims of civil rights
violations. See
http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/legalinfo/nordwg_mission.html

A recent fair housing case:
San Francisco, California—On
January 14, 2004, the Civil
Rights Division entered a
consent order resolving its
housing discrimination
complaint against the San
Francisco Housing Authority.
The complaint had alleged that
residents of public housing in
San Francisco have been
victims of racial, ethnic, and
religious harassment including
verbal abuse, racial slurs,
threats, assaults, vandalism,
and robbery, and that the
Housing Authority had failed to
take reasonable steps to
protect its tenants from this
harassment. The complaint
identified some of the victims
of harassment as Iraqi and
Muslim public housing
residents, and alleged that the
harassment had increased
following the terrorist attacks of
September 11, 2001. Under
the consent order, the Housing
Authority will modify its civil
rights policies and employee

training, and compensate the
victims.

Information on additional cases
brought to date by DOJ can be
viewed at:

<http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/legalinfo/discrimupdate.htm>

Information on federal
protections based upon national
origin can be accessed at:
http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/legalinfo/nordwg_brochure.html

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT REACHES SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The
Justice Department announced
the settlement of a lawsuit alleging
discrimination based on familial
status by the owners and
managers of four apartment
complexes in New Jersey: Lodi
Court Apartments and Lodi Circle
in Lodi, Wayne Kings Arms in
Wayne and Hawthorne Gardens in
Hawthorne.

The lawsuit alleged that
apartment managers violated the
Fair Housing Act by refusing to
rent to families with children.
Specifically, the defendants' rental
policy prohibited young children
from living in second-floor units.

Under the consent order, which
was filed in the U.S. District Court
for the District of New Jersey and
must still be approved by the
court, the owners and managers
of the complexes will pay
\$192,000 to settle the lawsuit. As
part of the settlement, they will
pay each of the named individuals
\$24,000 and will contribute
\$20,000 for the purpose of
compensating any additional
individuals who suffered as a
result of defendants'
discriminatory housing practices.
The defendants will also pay a
civil penalty of \$4,000.

"Under federal law, families with
children have the right to equal
access to housing," said R.
Alexander Acosta, Assistant
Attorney General for Civil Rights.

“Settlements such as today’s help ensure that all families enjoy that right.”

As part of the settlement, the defendants are prohibited from discriminating in the rental process against families with children. The agreement also requires defendants to implement non-discriminatory procedures for processing rental applications; display fair housing signs; make periodic reports and submit to testing and/or monitoring to ensure compliance with the agreement; and receive training on the Fair Housing Act.

The federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, familial status (having children under 18 years old), national origin and disability. Since January 1, 2001, the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division has filed 117 Fair Housing Act cases, including 27 based on familial status discrimination.

WEB SITE

Be sure to visit the NDFHC web site at: www.ndfhc.org

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