

GREATER
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**FAIR
HOUSING
ACTION CENTER**

NEWS RELEASE

GREATER NEW ORLEANS FAIR HOUSING ACTION CENTER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 4, 2009
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FAIR HOUSING CENTER KEEPS PRESSURE ON ST. BERNARD PARISH

While the Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center (GNOFHAC) is pleased with the St. Bernard Parish Council's vote to overturn an ordinance that would put a multi-family ban on the ballot for a public vote, it will continue to closely monitor the parish for any actions that violate the Fair Housing Act. GNOFHAC is especially troubled by comments made by parish officials and quoted in the Times-Picayune that seem to disregard the authority of federal courts and civil rights laws. Kate Scott, Interim Co-Director of GNOFHAC, comments, "We hope this move on the part of Parish officials to rescind the vote to ban multi-family housing signals a newfound commitment to open housing in St. Bernard Parish. We stand firm in our commitment to our mission of furthering equal housing opportunity throughout the region."

The ordinance to vote on the multi-family moratorium is the latest in a long string of race-based attempts by St. Bernard Parish to block multi-family developments in the Parish. On October 13, 2009, GNOFHAC filed a fourth Motion for Contempt in a winding legal battle, alleging St. Bernard Parish violated the federal Fair Housing Act and a 2008 Consent Order in passing the ordinance for a public vote to ban multi-family housing. Judge Berrigan previously ordered the St. Bernard Parish Council to rescind a similar ordinance, holding that the "Council's intent in enacting and continuing the moratorium is and was racially discriminatory."

In response to the ordinance establishing the public vote on the 2009 moratorium, GNOFHAC spent considerable time and resources in developing an educational campaign to combat some of the myths surrounding affordable and multi-family housing. When the Parish notified the Court of its intent to rescind the ordinance, GNOFHAC slowed campaign production while continuing to monitor the actions of the Parish. Some educational resources and a timeline of GNOFHAC's multi-year litigation with the Parish are available at www.nomultifamilymoratorium.org.

On November 4, 2009 lawyers for St. Bernard Parish provided

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notice to the Honorable Judge Helen G. Berrigan that the Parish Council voted to rescind the ordinance calling for the public vote at its November 3 meeting. The Parish asked the judge to dismiss GNOFHAC's Motion for Contempt.

Relman & Dane PLLC represented GNOFHAC in this matter.

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The Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center (GNOFHAC) is a private non-profit organization. The Center was established by a group of concerned New Orleanians in 1995 with the help of the National Fair Housing Alliance and a grant from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. GNOFHAC is dedicated to eliminating housing discrimination and furthering equal housing opportunities through education, outreach, advocacy, and enforcement of fair housing laws across the metro New Orleans and Baton Rouge areas. The activities described in this release were privately funded.