

NEWS RELEASE

GREATER NEW ORLEANS FAIR HOUSING ACTION CENTER

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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FAIR HOUSING CENTER PARTIALLY GRANTED THIRD MOTION FOR CONTEMPT AGAINST ST. BERNARD PARISH

On September 11, 2009, the Honorable Judge Helen G. Berrigan generally granted the Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center's (GNOFHAC) and Provident Realty Advisors' third motion for contempt against St. Bernard Parish. Judge Berrigan enjoins the Parish from "interfering or withholding approval of Provident's re-subdivision applications," deems Provident's re-subdivision applications approved, sets forth several deadlines for Parish officials to meet in regards to the re-subdivision and building permit approval process, and establishes a daily sanction beginning at \$5,000 the first day and increasing to \$10,000 each day thereafter should the Parish "fail to meet *any* of the various deadlines without advance notice and good cause shown for their failure." Further, Judge Berrigan awards damages and refers the issue of the amounts of damages, reasonable attorneys' fees and costs to Magistrate Judge Shushan.

In her ruling, Judge Berrigan writes "this court has repeatedly found the stated justifications given by these officials to be unsound, contrived, pretextual, and racially discriminatory. In addition to depriving the parish of badly needed affordable housing across race lines, the continued opposition has also cost the taxpayers of St. Bernard Parish tens of thousands of dollars in legal fees and threatens to cost them significantly more in the near future."

The ruling is GNOFHAC's fifth win in a winding case seeking to insure fair housing opportunity in St. Bernard Parish. In the course of the multi-year litigation, GNOFHAC has successfully challenged St. Bernard's two multi-family construction moratoria, and an ordinance that restricted the rental of single-family residences to those related by blood to the owner of the property.

Relman & Dane PLLC represented GNOFHAC in this matter.

James Perry, Executive Director of GNOFHAC, comments, "We hope that Parish officials will finally heed Judge Berrigan's ruling. Residents of St. Bernard Parish have made great progress toward recovery in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, but it is essential that this recovery comply with the Fair Housing Act, instead of being

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guided by fears and prejudice based on race and class.”

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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.