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Canal Street landlord agrees to \$70K settlement in discrimination lawsuit

by The Associated Press

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The Justice Department says a group of New Orleans landlords has agreed to pay \$70,000 in damages and penalties to settle a lawsuit alleging they denied housing to black prospective renters at an apartment building in violation of the federal Fair Housing Act.

The agreement, which still must be approved by a federal judge in Louisiana, was announced Monday. [The settlement would resolve a lawsuit](#) claiming the defendants — Betty Bouchon, the Bouchon Limited Family Partnership and Sapphire Corp. — discriminated against the



prospective renters. The claims were

based on fair-housing testing conducted by the Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center.

"In these challenging economic times, it is more important than ever that all Americans be able to rent or buy housing they can afford, and not face discrimination because of the color of their skin," Thomas Perez, assistant attorney general for civil rights, said in a statement.

The lawsuit alleclaimsBetty Bouchon, the building manager, failed to return calls from black testers while returning phone calls from white testers, made statements to white testers indicating she would not rent to black people, and falsely told a black tester than an apartment was not available for rent when in fact it was available.

Under the terms of the settlement, the defendants will pay \$50,000 to GNOFHAC and \$20,000 in civil penalties to the United States. The settlement also requires the defendants to adopt nondiscriminatory policies, keep detailed records of inquiries from prospective tenants and of rental transactions, and submit periodic reports over the four year term of the settlement.

GNOFHAC filed a separate lawsuit, which is pending in federal court.

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