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NEW ORLEANS



FAIR
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of fighting housing
discrimination

NEWS RELEASE

GREATER NEW ORLEANS FAIR HOUSING ACTION CENTER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ST. BERNARD PARISH TO PAY AN ADDITIONAL \$123,771.92 IN SETTLEMENT OF BLOOD RELATIVE RENTAL ORDINANCE LAWSUIT

St. Bernard Parish must pay \$123,771.92 in fees and costs to attorneys representing the Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center (GNOFHAC) and an individual plaintiff pursuant to a court order issued in Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center v. St. Bernard Parish et al, Case No. 06-7185, United States District Court, Eastern District of Louisiana. The fees and costs are in addition to the \$32,500 previously paid by the Parish as part a Consent Order in settlement of the claim for damages. This brings the total payout by the Parish up to a total of \$152,271.92.

The lawsuit was filed in November 2006 and asked the federal court to enjoin St. Bernard Parish from enforcing an ordinance barring single-family homeowners from renting to anyone except blood relatives without the special permission of the Parish Council. GNOFHAC alleged that the ordinance disproportionately excluded minority families seeking housing, and perpetuated the parish's history as a segregated, predominantly white community.

The Fair Housing Act, as amended (The Act), expressly prohibits discrimination in the rental or sale of a dwelling on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, familial status, disability or national origin. 42 U.S.C. § 3604 (a). The Act has been interpreted to prohibit municipalities from using their zoning powers in a manner that excludes housing for a group of people on the basis of one of the enumerated classifications. The Act is violated even when seemingly neutral zoning policies have a discriminatory effect on a particular protected class and cause harm to a community through the perpetuation of segregation. As such, the Ordinance is likely illegal discrimination.

James Perry, GNOFHAC Executive Director comments, "We hope that the result of this lawsuit sends a strong message to local governments that choose to enact discriminatory zoning ordinances. GNOFHAC is dedicated to achieving the mission of ensuring equal housing opportunities for all members of our community. Governmental efforts to exclude protected class members, intentional or not, will be challenged."

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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 litigation described in this release was pursued exclusively using private funds. This is independent agency based litigation. It is not funded with Fair Housing Initiatives Program (FHIP) funds or sponsored/ authorized by the Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity.

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