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N E W O R L E A N S



**FAIR
HOUSING
ACTION CENTER**

*Celebrating 10 years
of fighting housing
discrimination*

**NEWS RELEASE
GREATER NEW ORLEANS FAIR HOUSING ACTION CENTER**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 3, 2006
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**FAIR HOUSING CENTER FILES SUIT AGAINST ST. BERNARD
PARISH; ANNOUNCES NEWS CONFERENCE REGARDING
LAWSUIT**

The Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center (GNOFHAC) filed suit this morning against St. Bernard Parish in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana. The suit prays for a permanent injunction restraining St. Bernard Parish from enforcing its single-family and blood-relative ordinances.

GNOFHAC will host a news conference at 1:00 p.m. to provide details of the lawsuit. Additionally, attendees will hear from a landlord harmed by the discriminatory ordinance. The event will be held on the neutral ground near the intersection of St. Claude Ave. & Mehle Ave, in front of the St. Bernard Parish "Welcome," sign.

GNOFHAC filed the lawsuit because the ordinance's blood relative requirement will prevent St. Bernard homeowners with covered residences from renting to any person not of the owner's own race and national origin. The most recent estimates from United States Census Data indicate that whites own nearly 93% of St. Bernard Parish owner-occupied housing. As a result, in most circumstances only whites would be able to rent most single-family housing in the Parish.

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, "When people enter the Parish, the sign says "Welcome to St. Bernard," but

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this ordinance makes it clear that if you're not white, you're probably not welcome. Our goal is to make sure that everyone is truly welcome to live in the Parish. We have attempted to settle the matter amicably, but the Parish has flatly refused requests to reverse the ordinance. We have been left with no choice but to pursue legal action."

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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.