



# Department of Justice

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## **JUSTICE DEPARTMENT OBTAINS \$535,000 JUDGMENT IN HOUSING DISCRIMINATION CASE AGAINST OHIO LANDLORD**

### Second Largest Award Obtained by Justice Department in Fair Housing Act Case

WASHINGTON - The Justice Department today announced that a former landlord in the Dayton, Ohio, area has been ordered by District Court Judge Walter H. Rice to pay \$535,000 in damages for discriminating against African-Americans and families with children at three apartment complexes he owned and managed. The damage award is the second largest ever obtained by the Justice Department in a Fair Housing Act case.

“Unlawful housing discrimination poses a serious hardship for American families looking for a place to live,” said Wan J. Kim, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. “The Justice Department has long fought for the rights granted to all Americans by the Fair Housing Act, and we will continue to do so vigorously.”

In the decision, released late Friday, March 30, 2007, the court found that the defendant, Roger Matusoff, had engaged in a pattern or practice of discrimination against African-Americans and families with children at three apartment complexes near Dayton, Ohio: the Villa De Marquis Apartments in Troy, Ohio; the Northwood Village Apartments in Sidney, Ohio; and the Villa De Marquis Apartments in Xenia, Ohio.

The court ordered the defendant to pay a total of \$405,000 in compensatory damages and \$130,000 in punitive damages to 26 individual victims of Matusoff’s discrimination. The damage award is the second largest ever obtained by the Justice Department in a Fair Housing Act case. The largest damage award obtained by the Justice Department in a Fair Housing Act case occurred in May 2004, when a jury in Kansas City awarded over \$1.1 million against two landlords for sexual harassment.

The case originated when two former employees of Matusoff and three African-Americans who had been denied housing by Matusoff filed discrimination complaints with the

Department of Housing and Urban Development. HUD conducted an investigation, issued a charge of discrimination, and referred the matter to the Justice Department.

Fighting illegal housing discrimination is a top priority of the Justice Department. The Department has filed 218 cases alleging violations of the Fair Housing Act since January 1, 2001, including 61 alleging race discrimination and 43 alleging familial status discrimination.

In February 2006, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales announced Operation Home Sweet Home, a concentrated initiative to expose and eliminate housing discrimination in America. This initiative was inspired by the plight of displaced victims of Hurricane Katrina who were suddenly forced to find new places to live. Operation Home Sweet Home is not limited to the areas hit by Hurricane Katrina and targets housing discrimination all over the country. More information about Operation Home Sweet Home can be found on the Justice Department Web site, <http://www.usdoj.gov/fairhousing>.

The federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, familial status, national origin and disability. Individuals who believe that they may have been victims of housing discrimination can call our Housing Discrimination Tip Line (1-800-896-7793), email us at [fairhousing@usdoj.gov](mailto:fairhousing@usdoj.gov), or contact the Department of Housing and Urban Development at 1-800-669-9777. More information about the Civil Rights Division and the laws it enforces is available at <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt>.

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