



Department of Justice

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JUSTICE DEPARTMENT RESOLVES DISCRIMINATION CASE AGAINST SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS, DEVELOPER

WASHINGTON — The Justice Department today reached a \$60,000 settlement with a Springfield, Ill., development company and the estate of its former principal officer to settle a disability discrimination lawsuit filed in November 2005. The settlement resolves allegations that the defendants refused to sell property in a Springfield-area subdivision because the buyer intended to house six persons with disabilities there.

“All persons with disabilities deserve the right to be protected by federal civil rights laws,” said Wan J. Kim, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. “The Justice Department will continue to vigorously enforce the federal fair housing laws to provide fairness in housing markets.”

In its lawsuit, the United States alleged that Fleetwood Capital Development LLC and its principal officer, John Howard (now deceased), violated the Fair Housing Act when they refused to sell a lot in their new subdivision to Bethesda Lutheran Homes and Services because they learned that Bethesda intended to use the property for a group home for six developmentally disabled adults. Under the settlement, which must be approved by the court, the defendants will adopt nondiscriminatory procedures for the sale of the remaining lots in the subdivision, will pay \$50,000 in monetary damages to Bethesda, and will pay \$10,000 as a civil penalty to the United States.

Fighting illegal housing discrimination is a top priority of the Justice Department. 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 across the country.

More information about Operation Home Sweet Home is available at the Justice

Department Web site at <http://www.usdoj.gov/fairhousing>. 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, or contact the Department of Housing and Urban Development at 1-800-669-9777.

The federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, familial status, national origin and disability. Since Jan. 1, 2001, the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division has filed 218 cases to enforce the Fair Housing Act, including 98 alleging discrimination based on disability. More information about the Civil Rights Division and the laws it enforces is available at <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt>.

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