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JUSTICE DEPARTMENT SETTLES ITS LARGEST LAWSUIT
ALLEGING DISABILITY-BASED HOUSING DISCRIMINATION

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The Justice Department today announced that it has reached an agreement with four firms that designed and constructed multiple housing complexes in several states, resolving a lawsuit that alleged disability related housing discrimination. The agreement represents the Department's largest settlement agreement ever reached in a design and construction case. "Developers who fail to take the reasonable and affordable steps to ensure that their buildings are accessible unlawfully exclude individuals with disabilities from the community," said Alex Acosta, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. "Today's landmark settlement makes thousands of units accessible for people with disabilities. We remain committed to enforcing the housing rights of all Americans."

According to the government's complaint, Fugitt & Associates Architects, Inc.; Lindsey Construction Company, Inc.; Crafton, Tull & Associates; and Bond Consulting Engineers, Inc. violated the Fair Housing Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act by designing and constructing multiple housing complexes in a manner that left them inaccessible to people with disabilities.

The agreement, which still must be approved by a federal court, affects over 4,000 ground floor apartments in 34 housing complexes in Arkansas, Texas, Oklahoma, Missouri, Tennessee, and Kansas. Under the agreement, the defendants will make accessibility improvements to the units and the complexes' common areas. The agreement also establishes a \$1.2 million fund to compensate individuals injured by the inaccessible housing. After individuals have been compensated, a portion of the money remaining in the fund will be used to make modifications to the homes of individuals with disability in Arkansas.

"Enforcement of the Fair Housing Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act is an important function of the Department of Justice," said William M. Cromwell, Acting United States Attorney for the Western District of Arkansas. "I am pleased that the companies involved in this settlement were willing to correct their violations of federal accessibility requirements in innovative and effective ways."

Since January 1, 2001, the Civil Rights Division has filed 136 lawsuits alleging discrimination in housing, including 60 based on disability discrimination and 34 based on the Fair Housing Act's design and construction provisions that formed the basis of this lawsuit.

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