



Department of Justice

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2004
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TDD (202) 514-1888

CHICAGO AREA CONDOMINIUM ASSOCIATION PAYS \$83,500 TO SETTLE DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION LAWSUIT WITH THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT

WASHINGTON, D.C.

- The Justice Department today announced the settlement of a housing discrimination lawsuit alleging disability discrimination by the Triumvera Tower Condominium Association in Glenview, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago. Specifically, the lawsuit challenged the condominium association's policy requiring residents who use wheelchairs to enter the building only through its rear service entrance, even though the front entrance is fully accessible to wheelchairs.

"All Americans, including those with disabilities, deserve fair and dignified treatment," said R. Alexander Acosta, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. "Forcing individuals using wheelchairs to use the back door is reminiscent of an uglier time in American history, and falls far short of common decency. Today's settlement is a reminder that we are committed to enforcing the Fair Housing Act and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities."

"Prohibiting a person who uses a wheelchair from entering his or her condominium building through the front door is the kind of blatant discrimination the Fair Housing Act was enacted to remedy," said Patrick J. Fitzgerald, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois. "This case sends the message that second class treatment for persons with disabilities will not be tolerated."

The consent decree entered by the parties resolves both the Justice Department's suit and a related private suit into which the Department had intervened, both pending in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois. As part of the agreement, which was approved by the court today, the condominium association will reverse its policy of barring wheelchair users from using the front entrance. The association will also pay \$70,000 to a ten-year-old resident with a disability and his parents, \$10,000 in compensation for enforcing the rule against a former resident, and a civil penalty of \$3,500.

Fighting illegal housing discrimination is a top priority of the Civil Rights Division. This year, the Civil Rights Division will file a near-record number of lawsuits challenging patterns or practices violating the Fair Housing Act. The Division has already filed more fair housing lawsuits in 2004 than in all of 2003. The Division has been particularly active in the Chicago area during 2004, filing three lawsuits challenging housing discrimination on the basis of race or familial status (having children under the age of 18), and also taking enforcement actions in several other matters concluded by Department of Housing and Urban Development ("HUD"). In addition, the Division filed a major lawsuit against Chicago-based First American Bank for failing to provide credit services to minority homebuyers; access to adequate credit is a significant prerequisite to minority homeownership.

The federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, familial status, national origin, and disability. Since January 1, 2001, the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division has filed 130 cases to enforce the Fair Housing Act, including 58 based on disability discrimination.

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