



Fair Housing Newsletter

Keeping you current on fair housing news and issues



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Wisconsin Landlord Pays Over \$600K to Settle Sexual Harassment Lawsuit

A Wisconsin landlord, who owns more than 100 rental units, has settled a fair housing lawsuit brought by the U.S. Department of Justice. The Cost? \$623,965.

The 2022 lawsuit alleged that since 2000, the landlord harassed female tenants by making repeated and unwelcome sexual comments, touching tenants' bodies, demanding sexual activity in exchange for rent and housing-related benefits and taking adverse actions against tenants who resisted his sexual advances or complained about the harassment.

Under the terms of the agreement, the landlord will pay \$500,000 in monetary damages to 13 female tenants harmed by the alleged harassment. The landlord will also seek to vacate any retaliatory eviction judgments obtained against these tenants and take steps to correct the tenants' credit histories. The landlord is also permanently enjoined from managing residential rental properties in the future and must retain an independent property manager. Finally, the landlord must pay a \$123,695 civil penalty to the government. This is the maximum civil penalty allowed under the Fair Housing Act.



The Justice Department launched a Sexual Harassment in Housing Initiative in October 2017. Since that time, the DOJ reports it has filed 38 lawsuits alleging sexual harassment in housing and recovered more than \$11.8 million for victims of harassment

Note From the Editor: March has arrived and with it Spring. March is also the time for the annual Fair Housing Three-Part Webinar Series. Get your three hours of training for the year. For more information, see page 4.



Lawsuit Filed Against Landlords for Refusing Vouchers



The Housing Rights Initiative (HRI), a non-profit housing group, has filed a lawsuit against 20 Boston-area landlords and brokers. The lawsuit accuses the landlords and brokers of discriminating against low-income applicants by refusing to accept vouchers.

More specifically, the lawsuit alleges that the landlords and brokers refused to accept government housing vouchers, often referred to as Section 8 vouchers, which denied housing to poor tenants. Boston state law specifically prohibits landlords from discriminating against prospective tenants using housing vouchers. Additionally, the lawsuit claims that these practices cause racial segregation.

HRI used testers during its investigation and included screenshots of text messages between those testers and property owners or brokers. In multiple conversations, the landlords and brokers said Section 8 would not be accepted at their properties, despite the anti-discrimination law.

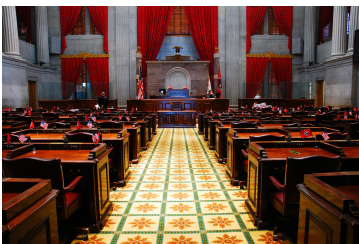
Emotional Support Chickens?

You read that right! Just in time for Spring, a Utah court recently decided that the eight emotional support chickens was too much. But, two was just enough.



TN Bill Would Require Disclosure of Fees

A bill pending in the Tennessee legislature would require landlords to disclose all fees charged in addition to rent before a rental prospect submits an application. As introduced, the bill (SAB 1983), would require a landlord, leasing company, or management company to disclose all fees charged in addition to a tenant's rent during a billing cycle. The disclosure would need to be made before a prospective tenant submitted an application. Among other things, the bill would also require the landlord to disclose whether the landlord or company accepts reusable screening reports or charges an application fee.



This bill is not unexpected. States across the nation are introducing and passing similar bills. The trend began after the White House released its "Blueprint for a Renters' Bill of Rights" in January, 2023. Also, in March, 2023, Marcia Fudge, Secretary of HUD, published a letter stating HUD's position on "junk fees." The Fudge letter encouraged landlords to eliminate or limit rental application fees, allow a single application fee to cover multiple locations; eliminate duplicative, and undisclosed fees; and clearly identify bottom-line amounts tenants will pay.

Stay-Tuned for more information.



HOUSING CROSSROADS

WHERE FAIR HOUSING AND
LANDLORD TENANT LAWS INTERSECT

Housing Crossroads Webinar

Top 10 Ways to Lose Your Lawsuit

Wednesday, April 24, 2024
10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. central

No one wants to lose a case in court. It is expensive, it is time-consuming and it is down-right embarrassing. Every day, there are more and more pitfalls for landlords to avoid. In this webinar, we'll discuss the most common reasons that landlords lose their eviction case in court, or fail to defend a Fair Housing claim. Our discussion will include:

1. Enforcing the Pet Policy Against an Emotional Support Animal
2. Taking Rent
3. Not Responding to Resident Complaints
4. Failing to Bring Proof
5. Making Inappropriate Comments about Residents
6. Detrimental Emails & Text Messages
7. Having a No-Felony Policy
8. Improper Courtroom Decorum
9. Failing to Discuss Accommodation Issues with a Resident
10. Bad Luck

\$34.99
[Register Now](#)



Nathan Lybarger
Law Office of Hall &
Associates

Speakers



Angelita Fisher
Law Office of Angelita E.
Fisher

Annual Three-Part Webinar Series



Part One **March 6, 2024** **Fair Housing Fundamentals**

[Register for Part One](#)
[Only - \\$24.99](#)

Knowing the basic fundamentals of fair housing laws will assist owners, managers and staff in making better decisions on what law may apply to their residents and what actions may violate fair housing laws. In this webinar, we will discuss the basics of fair housing laws and the process by which residents may make complaints. Our discussion will include: What Law Applies to Your Property; The Protected Classes; Two Types of Discrimination; Two Types of Harassment; The Complaint Process; and Retaliation.



Part Two **March 13, 2024** **Common Fair Housing Issues**

[Register for Part Two](#)
[Only - \\$24.99](#)

Certain issues in fair housing arise time and again. It is important for managers and staff to know the answers before they make common mistakes. In this webinar, we will discuss the current status of the law on common fair housing issues. Our discussion will include common issues for the protected classes of: Familial Status; Sex / Gender; Race / National Origin; and Religion.



Part Three **March 20, 2024** **Making Reasonable Accommodations and Modifications**

[Register for Part Three](#)
[Only - \\$24.99](#)

Residents who are disabled file more fair housing complaints than all other protected classes combined. Why? Maybe because the accommodation process is easy to mess up. In this webinar, we will talk about a landlord's requirement to reasonably accommodate as well as some of the most common accommodation requests. Our discussion will include: Knowing the Difference between an Accommodation and Modification; Paying for the Accommodation/Modification; Getting the Paperwork Right; and Common Accommodations.



[Register for All Three Webinars](#)
\$ 64.99

12 AL Tenants Receive \$390,000 for Sexual Harassment

The U.S. Department of Justice and a Cullman, Alabama landlord have agreed to settle a 2018 fair housing lawsuit following three-days of trial. The lawsuit alleged that for at least seven years, the landlord subjected female tenants and prospective tenants to a continuing pattern of harassment. The allegations included: demanding or pressuring female tenants to engage in sexual acts with him in exchange for rent or to prevent eviction; evicting female tenants when they refused his advances; making female tenants feel unsafe by stalking them and entering their residences without permission; and making unwelcome sexual comments.



Under the agreement, the landlord will pay \$390,000 in damages to 12 women who rented or sought to rent mobile homes from the landlord and a civil penalty to the government. The agreement also prohibits the landlord from managing rental housing or contacting any of the women or their families.

Lesson Learned: Sexual Harassment Lawsuits are Very Expensive.

Fair Housing Webinar

Managing Animals on the Property



Wednesday, April 10, 2024
10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. Central

\$24.99

It is a Zoo out there: Pet Spiders, Service Horses, Emotional Support Snakes, and Therapy Pigs! What is a Property Manager to do? What rules apply?

In this webinar, we will discuss the difference between pets, service animals and emotional support animals. We will review policies that a landlord may apply to pets and which he/she may apply to support animals and what documentation a landlord is entitled to. We will discuss:

- Understanding the Difference
- On-Line Health Care Letters
- Aggressive Animals
- Damages and Deposits
- Policies and Restrictions
- Plus, Much, Much, More

\$24.99
[Register Now](#)