



For Immediate Release
April 11, 2013

Contact: Deidre Swesnik
202-898-1661 x131, dswesnik@nationalfairhousing.org

Housing Discrimination against Gays, Lesbians, and Poor Still Legal in Most States

National Fair Housing Alliance Report Calls for Modernizing Fair Housing Act to Include Protection for LGBT People and Source of Income

Report and Info-Graphics Highlighting States at www.nationalfairhousing.org

Washington, DC – Today the National Fair Housing Alliance (NFHA) released “Modernizing the Fair Housing Act for the 21st Century,” its 2013 Fair Housing Trends Report. This year’s report highlights the need to amend the federal Fair Housing Act to outlaw discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, source of income, and marital status.

The report finds a rise in the number of housing discrimination complaints filed by individuals and families with a marked spike in harassment complaints. Harassment complaints were up 35% from last year’s numbers and include complaints because of race, national origin, disability, sex, and having children in the home. Included in the report are harassment and other complaints from Louisiana, New York, Ohio, Texas, and other states.

A total of 28,519 complaints were investigated in 2012 by private non-profit fair housing organizations, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the U.S. Department of Justice, and state and local government agencies such as state civil rights commissions. HUD estimates that this already high number represents less than one percent of the approximately four million acts of housing discrimination each year against current populations protected by federal law.

KEY FINDINGS IN THE REPORT:

- Harassment complaints increased by 35%;
- Almost 30,000 housing discrimination complaints nationwide in 2012 (out an of estimated four million incidents each year);
- Private, nonprofit fair housing organizations investigated 69% of all complaints;
- Housing discrimination because of source of income is still legal in 38 states;
- Housing discrimination because of sexual orientation is still legal in 29 states, and because of gender identity in 34 states;

- Spike in complaints by people not protected under federal fair housing law:
 - source of income up 38%
 - sexual orientation up 43%
 - marital status up 63%
 - gender identity and expression complaints reported for the first time.

“It’s high time to amend the Fair Housing Act to include protections for sexual orientation and gender identity as well as source of income,” said Shanna L. Smith, NFHA’s President and CEO. “The Fair Housing Act has been amended over the years to adapt to changing times. It’s time for the federal government to catch up with the states doing the right thing and to protect all people from housing discrimination.”

Housing discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people is still legal in most states. 21 states and the District of Columbia protect against housing discrimination based on sexual orientation; 16 states and the District have protections for gender identity.

Landlords and other housing providers in 38 states can still discriminate against a family simply because of their source of income, even if they can afford the home. Legal source of income can come from alimony, child support, government assistance from Veterans Affairs and HUD, and many other sources. This discrimination hits low-income people the hardest; the worst hit are low-income women and families, people of color, and people with disabilities.

“If a family qualifies for an apartment and can pay for it, they should get it,” continued Smith. “It’s simple economics. Today marks the 45th anniversary of the Fair Housing Act passed on April 11, 1968, one week to the day after the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated. Dr. King knew that poverty was the next frontier to fight when he began his Poor People’s Campaign at the end of his life. Congress should honor the memory of Dr. King and modernize the Fair Housing Act for the 21st century.”

To read NFHA’s 2013 Trends Report and view graphics including U.S. maps with state law information, please go to www.nationalfairhousing.org.

Shanna L. Smith, NFHA’s President and CEO of the National Fair Housing Alliance, is available for interviews.

About the National Fair Housing Alliance (www.nationalfairhousing.org)

Founded in 1988 and headquartered in Washington, DC, the National Fair Housing Alliance is a consortium of more than 220 private, non-profit fair housing organizations, state and local civil rights agencies, and individuals from throughout the United States. Through comprehensive education, advocacy and enforcement programs, NFHA protects and promotes residential integration and equal access to apartments, houses, mortgage loans and insurance policies for all residents of the nation.