

FAIR HOUSING OF MARIN

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FAIR HOUSING OF MARIN JOINS LAWSUIT AGAINST NATIONAL BUILDER FOR ACCESSIBILITY VIOLATIONS

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The lawsuit complaint is available on the National Fair Housing Alliance website:
www.nationalfairhousing.org

SAN FRANCISCO, CA - June 21, 2007 – The National Fair Housing Alliance and four of its member fair housing organizations today filed a housing discrimination lawsuit against AG Spanos Companies, a builder and developer of multifamily housing and commercial properties in at least 16 states.

In their lawsuit, the National Fair Housing Alliance, Fair Housing of Marin, Fair Housing Napa Valley, Metro Fair Housing Services, and the Fair Housing Continuum allege that Spanos failed to comply with federal accessibility standards in the design and construction of their properties. AG Spanos Companies is headquartered in Stockton, CA with regional division offices across the country. The lawsuit was filed in the Federal District Court of San Francisco.

The fair housing organizations investigated 35 apartment complexes in California, Arizona, Nevada, Texas, Kansas, Georgia and Florida, all of which failed to meet the accessibility requirements of the Fair Housing Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. These 35 properties, totaling more than 10,000 individual apartment dwelling units, represent only a sample of the at least 84 Spanos properties that are covered by the federal Fair Housing Act. The Fair Housing Act makes it illegal to discriminate based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability or familial status.

Since 1991, AG Spanos has engaged in a continuous pattern and practice of discrimination against people with disabilities by designing and/or constructing multifamily dwellings with significant design flaws that render them inaccessible to people with disabilities. Examples of accessibility barriers include no handicap parking spaces, steep slopes, steps instead of ramps, narrow door widths and passageways, insurmountable thresholds, and inaccessible bathrooms and kitchens. Still others place environmental controls and electrical sockets beyond the reach of wheelchair users, and have constructed leasing offices, common

restrooms, recreational and entertainment facilities in such a way to make them inaccessible to wheelchair users.

“It is outrageous that more than 16 years after the effective date of the Fair Housing Act’s accessibility requirements, and more than 14 years after the effective date of the ADA, people with disabilities continue to face discrimination because of a building’s inaccessible design. Those in violation must be held accountable.” **Shanna Smith - President & CEO, National Fair Housing Alliance**

“It can be hard for an able-bodied person to understand the many barriers that a person with a disability faces. A raised threshold, a series of steps or a narrow passageway can make a difference between who can and can’t enjoy a home to its fullest extent.” **Nancy Kenyon - Executive Director, Fair Housing of Marin**

“Building apartments that exclude people with disabilities is a violation of the trust of the Napa community. This exclusion impacts every resident in the community because we all have friends or relatives that are disabled or may become disabled.” **Kathryn Winter - Executive Director, Fair Housing Napa Valley**

“There is not a single valid reason for architects, developers, and builders to continue designing and building inaccessible multi-family housing. Over 16 years after the Fair Housing Act was amended to provide accessible multi-family housing, people with disabilities housing rights continue to be violated on a daily basis.” **David Baade - Executive Director, Fair Housing Continuum in Cocoa, Florida**

“The Fair Housing Act recognizes that people with disabilities can face discrimination because of a building’s inaccessible design. Builders and developers are required by law to construct housing units that are accessible for people with disabilities. Unfortunately, AG Spanos did not abide by this standard.” **Foster Corbin - Executive Director, Metro Fair Housing Services in East Point, Georgia**

WEBCAST and NEWS CONFERENCE INFO:

When: Thursday, June 21, 2007 at 10:30 AM PST

Where: San Francisco Arts Commission
25 Van Ness Avenue (at Market Street); Room 70
San Francisco, CA 94102

Web-Based Conference: Call in number: 1 (800) 749-0693; Passcode: 18246528
Weblink: <http://web.meetme.net/r.aspx?p=2&a=70541824652857>

Fair Housing of Marin provides counseling, investigative services, mediation and legal or administrative referrals to persons experiencing housing discrimination. There is no charge for these services; Spanish is spoken. We also offer advice and seminars for the housing

industry, to help apartment-owners, managers and real estate professionals fully understand fair housing laws. We also offer free, entertaining diversity programs for Marin's students and the general public. Individuals and property owners with fair housing questions are encouraged to call Fair Housing of Marin at (415) 457-5025 or visit our website at www.fairhousingmarin.com.

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