



Housing Research & Advocacy Center
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Read the report: <http://www.thehousingcenter.org/Publications/Research-Reports.html>

Housing Discrimination Complaints Remain High in Northeast Ohio 2009 Filings Down 10% from 2008, Yet Remain at Near Historic High

Although complaints of housing discrimination in Northeast Ohio decreased by 10 percent in 2009 compared to 2008, the number remained significantly higher than the average number of complaints filed in the last 20 years and represented the second highest yearly total since 1990, according to a new report issued by the Housing Research & Advocacy Center in Cleveland.

The report, based on the number of complaints filed in the region with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), found that 223 complaints were filed in 2009, compared to 254 in 2008 and a 20-year average of 125.2 complaints in the region. The Housing Center's report also examined trends in discrimination complaints over the last ten years, finding an 85% increase in complaints filed from 2005-2009, when an average of 181.6 complaints were filed each year, compared to the previous five-year period, when the yearly average was 98. This increase was due to a 64.3% increase in the number of cases based on disability (from 154 to 253) and a 60.9% increase in the number of cases based on race (from 174 to 280).

Jeffrey D. Dillman, Executive Director of the Housing Center, stated, "While it is good to see the numbers come down even a little bit from the historic high in 2008, the number of complaints filed in 2009 is very concerning, and we know that these complaints represent only a small portion of the amount of discrimination in the region." The Housing Center estimates that there are annually at least 33,690 instances of housing discrimination in the region against African Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, and Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the rental and sales markets, meaning the vast majority of cases are never reported to a government agency.

The report, entitled "The State of Fair Housing in Northeast Ohio: April 2010," is the Housing Center's fifth annual comprehensive survey of fair housing in Northeast Ohio, analyzing housing discrimination and segregation in a six-county region (Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, and Medina Counties). The other findings of the report include that:

- The number of cases brought based on familial status, national origin, sex/gender, and religion also increased from 2000-2004 to 2005-2009.
- The most common bases of discrimination alleged in complaints filed in 2005-2009 were race (30.8%), disability (27.9%), and familial status (19.6%).
- Over the 20-year period, 1990-2009, cases filed alleging race discrimination accounted for 39.6% of the total, compared to 23.4% for handicap, 19.3% for familial status, 6.9% for national origin, 4.8% for sex/gender, 1.7% for religion, and 1.0% for color.
- From 1990-2009, almost three-quarters of the complaints (73.9%) were filed in Cuyahoga County.
- 55 local governments in the region have passed fair housing ordinances – 36 in Cuyahoga County, compared to nine in Lorain County, four Lake County, three in Ashtabula County, and three in Medina County. There are no local fair housing ordinances in Geauga County.

Dillman continued, “Governments at all levels have an obligation to affirmatively further fair housing.” HUD Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing, John Trasviña, noted in January that this requirement “means not only continuing to address acts of discrimination, but also using fair housing laws to strengthen neighborhoods.”

Federal law prohibits discrimination in the rental or sale of housing, and in the mortgage lending and homeowners insurance markets, based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, familial status and handicap. In addition, Ohio law prohibits discrimination based on ancestry and military status.

The report recommends enacting stronger local fair housing laws, restoring Ohio’s fair housing law to make it equivalent to federal fair housing laws at all levels, strengthen the commitment of governments that receive federal funds to “affirmatively further fair housing,” creating a federal Consumer Financial Protection Agency, increasing monitoring and investigations of mortgage lenders, implementing comprehensive education efforts, ensuring that all online housing advertisements fully comply with fair housing laws, and providing government incentives and other creative solutions to combat housing discrimination and racial and economic segregation.

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The Housing Research & Advocacy Center is a nonprofit fair housing organization whose mission is to eliminate housing discrimination and assure choice in Northeast Ohio by providing those at risk with effective information, intervention and advocacy. The Housing Center is a founding member of Greater Cleveland Community Shares.