



Minnesota Department of Human Rights

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**GOVERNOR'S NEW HORIZONS TASK FORCE ON FAIR HOUSING
REPORT**

HOUSING DISCRIMINATION IN MINNESOTA

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*For Further Information
Contact: Sylvia E. Anderson
294-9040*

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NEED

Nationwide in 1985, there were 4,112 housing discrimination claims filed, with 41% of the 4,112 found to have probable cause. In comparison to the probable cause findings in other types of discrimination cases filed, the 41% ratio is high. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (H.U.D.), in a 1985 report, speculated that there may be as many as one million incidences of housing discrimination occurring annually.

In Minnesota, in 1985, the Minnesota Department of Human Rights, the St. Paul Department of Human Rights and the Minneapolis Department of Civil Rights all reported an increase in housing discrimination claims filed in comparison to the number filed in 1984. If H.U.D. is correct in its speculations, even though the number of claims are rising, still far more go unreported. Minnesota had a total of 250 housing discrimination claims filed in 1985. If all states in the union reported 250 housing discrimination claims in 1985, that would still only be 12,500 nationwide, which is a far cry from one million.

Minnesota has a diverse population with different cultures, which could explain one reason for the low number of housing discrimination claims filed. The people who suffer the bulk of discriminatory incidences, are minority families. These families are defined as: American Indian, Asian, Black, Hispanic, Female Head of Household, and Handicapped. It is a known fact that American Indians, Asians and Blacks, report few, if any, charges of housing discrimination to the state or H.U.D. agency. American Indians as well as Asians show a distrust for official government agencies and will turn instead to their own people and communities for help in situations. Unfortunately, these communities can often only offer moral support and help in locating the aggrieved party a home they can live in. All too often, that area will be in a specific location where only Indians live.

One example of the distrust felt by American Indians of state and federal agencies is documented in The Upper Midwest Technical Report.

In 1978, there were 466 claims of housing discrimination but only one of the 466 claims ever was reported to the state or H.U.D. regional office.

Asian populations are equally quiet about housing discrimination incidences because they don't want any "trouble" and often times move on to another place where there is no "trouble".

A survey done in Blue Earth County by the Blue Earth Task Force in 1983, found that Black people reported a discrimination rate of 46.2% which was almost three times the average rate. Blacks were also found to move into neighborhoods inhabited by other Blacks for two main reasons; first, because they were steered there by real estate brokers or, second, as in the case of Asian people, they find less problems or trouble by moving into an ethnic neighborhood. Unfortunately, these neighborhoods do not always have the most desirable homes, they are either ghettos or on the verge of becoming ghettos.

If people are allowed to be forced into the imaginary boundaries which eventually become "their neighborhoods," we will be back to square one. The enactment of Title VIII, which guarantees all citizens of this country the right to fair and decent housing, would be decreased in its purpose.

Minnesota is a state with varying problems in different areas, however, when broken down into regions, some of the problems become more visible than others. For example, in region 9, there is a large female head of household population, who are often the victims of housing discrimination with regard to public assistance or familial status. In region 11, there is a large Handicapped population who find themselves locked into certain buildings when considering alternatives to housing, because builders and developers make no accommodations in their buildings for the physically handicapped. Most communities in this state do not enforce building codes.

Although the handicapped may be the most visible minority family member in region 11, this does not mean that there are no problems with American Indians, Asians, Blacks, etc. Each region has some similar concerns, depending on the make up of the population, and some have drastically different housing problems: By using a regional approach to the issues and concerns to fair housing for the citizens of this state, it could prove to be the most effective way in which to deal with minority housing problems.

Women and minorities are also underrepresented in the real estate industry in Minnesota. According to the paper, "People of Color and Women in Real Estate," there has been very little effort by companies or by area boards of reality to bring women and minorities into real estate. The number of minorities who are apartment managers, real estate appraisers, or real estate agents is disproportionately low.

There appears to be a problem with the knowledge of the law for minority families, in addition to real estate brokers, landlords, builders and developers.

Most citizens in this state are not aware of their rights and remedies to fair housing. There is one school of thought that suggests, that if citizens were educated and aware of their rights to fair housing, this educational awareness would reduce discrimination where it already exists and increase awareness of the law. In order to achieve this objective, Minnesota would have to have a statewide fair housing organization to address the housing problems that are adversely affecting 20% of its population.

Presently, there are only about one hundred people in the Human Rights agencies serving a population of over four million and handling a broad range of claims not only those dealing with housing. These agencies try to serve the citizens in this state with educational outreach programs, however, their main responsibility is enforcement of the laws. These agencies are also all located in the metropolitan area where the greatest percentage of claims are filed. The only attempt of a statewide fair housing organization available is in the form of the Community Housing Resources Boards (C.H.R.B.). While the C.H.R.B.'s are a vital organization to this state, they are

too few to represent the entire state's interest.

The development of a comprehensive, effective statewide fair housing organization is long overdue. The New Horizons Task Force is taking affirmative action to put such an organization into place, which will hopefully erase all forms of housing discrimination.

Minnesota serves as a leader for other states to follow on various issues, that self-same leadership should be exhibited to secure a state committed to fair and decent housing for all its citizens.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The New Horizons Task Force is making the following recommendations in hopes of erasing the harmful effects of housing discrimination in Minnesota.

These recommendations are not in priority order.

1. It is recommended that the New Horizons Task Force establish or contract with, a fair housing organization which would qualify as non-profit and tax deductible, as defined in the Federal Internal Revenue Code (Section 501 (c)(3), to implement a program of work developed by the Governor's New Horizons Task Force.
2. Develop, publish, and distribute a "generic" manual for use by those human rights and housing related groups and organizations. The manual would incorporate and cite existing fair housing provisions of the Minnesota Human Rights Act and Federal law. The document would include examples of discrimination practices and would provide for an inside flap where local human rights ordinance with their special fair housing sections could be inserted. Such a manual should be promoted as a tool for real estate agents, people seeking to be licensed by state or voluntary associations, educators, etc. The manual would include sections dealing with the filing of complaints, telephone numbers and addresses of appropriate agencies, and how one gets further information on the merit of specific situations.
3. Develop, publish and distribute "generic" brochure or pamphlet, not more than six panels in length that would be designed for distribution to the general population and its identifiable minority concentrations. The "user friendly" piece would highlight what fair housing is all about and how victims can get help quickly. Citations of federal public law or state statute would be substituted with more understandable language for everyday use. The brochure text would be available in several languages.

4. Develop a comprehensive, low cost, printed media campaign. The primary focus will be the classified ads and their placement in the rental and housing sections of Minnesota's 357 daily and weekly newspapers. The ads would be short and concise highlighting what is illegal discrimination in the housing business. Area boards of reality, human rights groups, etc., could join in cooperative ad buying arrangements. The 501 (c) (3) organization would have to provide samples of the classified ads, at least initially until the ad effort takes on a life of its own.
5. Provide sample "camera ready" display ads to interested real estate and fair housing groups which, in turn, can place them in local newspapers and association newsletters.
6. Produce a variety of radio spots or ads on cassettes and in written text which interested real estate and fair housing groups can reproduce at their cost.
7. Work with the Minneapolis Department of Civil Rights in the distribution of "generic" video tapes currently in the process of being produced. Encourage the broadcast of such video productions on smaller "outstate" television stations along with the seven county metro thrust of the Minneapolis Department of Civil Rights.
8. Advocate and promote the inclusion of a fair housing curriculum in the state's elementary and secondary schools, using existing drafts for Minneapolis as a model. Continue to encourage participation on the elementary and secondary level of students in the National Fair Housing Poster Contest which occurs as part of H.U.D.'s National April Fair Housing Month activities.
9. Contact the leadership of state real estate and housing associations, including the American Society of Appraisers, and others, and work with them to develop certain licensing and membership requirements which would ensure that fair housing as a topic, is understood by their members. Work with the Minnesota Department of Commerce and the Department of Education to determine how the generic manuals can be used as part of a broader educational requirement.

10. Establish a counseling service to advise citizens on the buying, selling, and renting of homes. Interpreters should be available upon request to help non-english speaking persons as well as the hearing impaired.
11. Establish a speakers bureau to address housing issues at schools and local community groups. This speakers bureau will not only address housing issues raised by community groups, but will also conduct seminars and workshops for communities.
12. Assist in the establishment of a scholarship fund for minorities who want to enter into a real estate career.
13. Develop and maintain a mailing list as a method of distribution. This mailing list will be comprised of public fair housing agencies, state offices, i.e., welfare offices, private fair housing agencies, legal aid offices, etc.
14. Design a magnetic and paper sticker that will be in the shape of the fair housing logo, with a number attached of the State Human Rights Department or H.U.D. area office, or appropriate office of local agency. The mailing list can be used for partial distribution. Sponsoring a booth at various county fairs and the state fair is a suggested manner in which to distribute these stickers, while also providing information to individuals receiving the stickers.
15. Design and distribute a fair housing book cover to be given away at local schools in conjunction with the speakers bureau, and the Fair Housing Month poster contest.