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JUSTICE NEWS

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Justice Department Files Lawsuit Alleging Racial Discrimination at Ann Arbor, Michigan, Apartment Complex

WASHINGTON – The Justice Department today filed a lawsuit against the owner and property manager of a 48-unit apartment complex in Ann Arbor, Mich., alleging that the defendants discriminated on the basis of race or color in the rental of apartments, the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Michigan announced.

"Housing is a basic human need, and no individual should be subjected to indignity of discrimination as they look for a home for their family," said Thomas E. Perez, Assistant Attorney General of the Civil Rights Division. "This lawsuit demonstrates that the Justice Department will not tolerate violations of our nation's fair housing laws."

"Discrimination in housing goes to the very core of American values," said Barbara L. McQuade, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan. "The ability to choose where to live affects every other aspect of life – access to schools, jobs and transportation – and we will not ignore violations of this fundamental right."

The lawsuit, filed in federal court in Detroit, alleges that Acme Investments Inc., d/b/a Ivanhoe House Apartments and Laurie Courtney, the apartment complex's property manager, engaged in a pattern or practice of discriminating against African American prospective renters. The allegations in the lawsuit are based on evidence generated by a series of fair housing tests conducted at Ivanhoe House Apartments by the Fair Housing Center of Southeastern Michigan, a private non-profit organization located in Ann Arbor. Testers are individuals who pose as applicants for housing and report on their interactions with housing providers to determine the providers' compliance with fair housing laws.

The Fair Housing Center of Southeastern Michigan filed a lawsuit against the defendants on July 16, 2009, based on the results of the fair housing tests. That lawsuit is currently pending in federal court before the Honorable Sean F. Cox.

The United States' complaint seeks a court order prohibiting future discrimination by the defendants, monetary damages for those harmed by the defendants' actions and a civil penalty.

Individuals who may have information related to this lawsuit should contact the Justice Department toll-free at 1-800-896-7743, mail box number 91, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Michigan at 313-226-9727, or email the Justice Department at fairhousing@usdoj.gov.

Fighting illegal housing discrimination is a top priority of the Justice Department. The federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability and familial status. More information about the Civil Rights Division and the laws it enforces is available at <http://www.justice.gov/crt>. Individuals who believe that they may have been victims of housing discrimination can call the Housing Discrimination Tip Line at 1-800-896-7743, e-mail the Justice Department at fairhousing@usdoj.gov, or contact HUD at 1-800-669-9777.

The complaint is an allegation of unlawful conduct. The allegations must be proven in federal court.

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Civil Rights Division