



**For Immediate Release**

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Contact: Deidre Swesnik  
(202) 898-1661  
[dswesnik@nationalfairhousing.org](mailto:dswesnik@nationalfairhousing.org)

## **Spike in Housing Discrimination Due to Foreclosure Crisis, Discriminatory Internet Advertising**

### ***Private Groups Handled Twice as Many Complaints as All Government Agencies Combined***

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, the National Fair Housing Alliance (NFHA) reported that housing discrimination in the nation has spiked for two reasons: the worsening foreclosure crisis and internet advertising that violates fair housing laws. “Fair Housing Enforcement: Time for a Change,” NFHA’s 2009 Fair Housing Trends Report, also notes that 93 private non-profit fair housing organizations processed almost twice as many cases last year as the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the U.S. Department of Justice, and 107 state and local government agencies combined.

The deepening foreclosure crisis accounts in part for the upsurge in housing discrimination. Private fair housing centers around the country have seen more cases of discrimination in mortgage lending than ever before. Yet, HUD initiated only 4 investigations into lending discrimination last year and DOJ brought only one mortgage lending case. In addition, HUD handled only 60 fair lending complaints in 2008, compared to 1,500 handled by private fair housing centers.

“Fair housing advocates have been warning the federal government for a decade, to no avail, about the damage that abusive lending would bring,” said Shanna L. Smith, NFHA President and CEO. “For too long, HUD and the Justice Department have stood by while people and neighborhoods of color have been targeted for predatory loans and stripped of equity. As we look forward to working with the new Administration to bring in an era of change, the change must begin with HUD’s and Justice’s fair housing enforcement programs.”

Fair housing complaints handled by private groups jumped by 17 percent from the previous year to 20,173. This amounts to 66 percent of all national complaints. In 2008, HUD handled only 2,123 fair housing complaints, state and local agencies only 8,429, and the Justice Department only 33 cases. The Fair Housing Act prohibits housing discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status and disability. It also covers all housing transactions and services, including advertising, rentals, sales, lending, and insurance, as well as harassment.

NFHA also attributes the increase in complaints to the large number of discriminatory housing ads on the internet. NFHA alone filed more than 350 complaints based on internet advertising discrimination with HUD last year, yet HUD refuses to use its subpoena power to find the individuals posting discriminatory ads. The majority of the ads discriminate against families with children. All types of discrimination against families increased between 2007 and 2008.

“Ads that we have seen like, ‘Indoor pets ok, no kids,’ are a clear violation of federal law and are simply unacceptable,” said Smith. “As more and more people turn to the internet for information, we anticipate hundreds more complaints from around the country. HUD needs to step up to the plate.”

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**About the National Fair Housing Alliance ([www.nationalfairhousing.org](http://www.nationalfairhousing.org))**

Founded in 1988, 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. Headquartered in Washington, D.C., the National Fair Housing Alliance, through comprehensive education, advocacy and enforcement programs, provides equal access to apartments, houses, mortgage loans and insurance policies for all residents of the nation.