



For Immediate Release
June 10, 2008

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CONGRESSMAN AL GREEN HONORED FOR DEDICATION TO FAIR HOUSING

“40 Years Later, There Is Still Great Work To Be Done”

Washington, DC – Today, Congressman Al Green (TX-09) was honored for his tireless dedication to advancing the cause of fair housing and equal rights, including his sponsorship of H.R. 2926, the Housing Fairness Act of 2007. Congressman Green was the first recipient of the Walter F. Mondale and Edward W. Brooke Fair Housing Award which was presented to him at the National Fair Housing Alliance’s Policy Conference titled “Reclaim Civil Rights – Make Fair Housing a Reality.” Senators Mondale and Brooke were the two original co-authors of the federal Fair Housing Act.

“I would like to thank the National Fair Housing Alliance for its long-standing commitment to ensuring affordable and adequate fair housing and for the work of its member service centers located throughout the country, including one in Houston, Texas,” Rep. Green stated. “Forty years ago, visionaries including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Senators Mondale and Brooke fought to expose and prevent the horrors of housing discrimination. Unfortunately, we are still fighting the invidious remnants of that very same fight today.”

This year marks the 40th Anniversary of the passage of the Fair Housing Act of 1968, which prohibits discrimination in housing and housing-related transactions on the basis of race, color, national origin, and religion. This vital legislation is the broadest and among the least enforced of our nation’s civil rights laws. According to the National Fair Housing Alliance, although nearly 4 million people are discriminated against in housing transactions every year, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development issued only 31 charges of discrimination in 2007 and the Department of Justice filed just 35 cases.

“Al Green has supported fair housing from the moment that he set foot in the House of Representatives,” stated Shanna L. Smith, President and CEO of the National Fair Housing Alliance. “Whenever something comes up before the House Financial Services

Committee, he is always the one asking the tough questions about fair housing issues. He cares about these issues from the heart – he is the go to guy on fair housing.”

To bolster federal efforts to combat fair housing violations, Congressman Green introduced H.R. 2926, The Housing Fairness Act, on June 28, 2007. This legislation:

- Directs the Secretary of HUD to conduct a nationwide testing program to measure patterns of housing discrimination
- Authorizes up to \$52 million in funding annually between 2008 and 2012 for the Fair Housing Initiatives Program, less than what we spend in one day on the war
- Establishes a competitive matching grant program to conduct studies evaluating the causes and effects of housing discrimination and to implement pilot projects to help prevent or alleviate housing segregation and discrimination.

“Forty years after the passage of the Fair Housing Act, Dr. King’s dream of eradicating housing discrimination has yet to be fully realized. Forty years ago, Dr. King proclaimed ‘we shall overcome.’ Yet today:

- It is estimated by the National Fair Housing Alliance that 4 million acts of fair housing discrimination occur each year;
- 27,000 housing discrimination complaints are filed annually;
- 13 fair housing groups have closed their doors within the last five years, due to a lack of funding;
- 26 fair housing centers, or one quarter of all fair housing centers in the country, have closed or are at risk of closing due to lack of funding;
- 87 percent of African Americans, Latinos and Asian-Americans who meet with real estate agents experience racial steering;
- African-Americans and Latinos experience a 20 percent denial rate; and
- Less than 1 percent of housing discrimination acts are reported

It is forty years later; however, we still have not overcome housing discrimination.”

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