

# hud **MEDIA ADVISORY**

Department of Housing and Urban Development – Alphonso Jackson, Secretary  
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## **HUD CHARGES THE HILLEBOLD FAMILY TRUST WITH VIOLATING THE FAIR HOUSING ACT**

*White woman forced to move out of her apartment after her African-American boyfriend moved in*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development announced today that it has charged John and Rosemary Hillebold, owners of an apartment building in New Lenox, Illinois, with violating the Fair Housing Act for allegedly forcing Joan Stover, a white woman to move out when her African-American boyfriend moved in.

The charge alleges the owners of the New Lenox apartment building took a series of actions that forced Stover to move out of her apartment. For example, the owners rarely raised the rent of its long-term tenants. Stover, who brought her complaint to HUD, had lived at the complex for 11 years and had a white male tenant live with her in her unit previously without his stay resulting in a rent increase. However, later, when an African-American boyfriend moved in, her rent went up twice in two months—from \$575 to \$675.

In addition to increasing Stover's rent, the charge also alleges that Rosemary Hillebold, the property manager, visited Stover's parents to complain about Stover to them. The property manager's visit prompted Stover's parents to direct her to break up with her boyfriend and to tell her that she would be evicted. In January 2005, Hillebold told Stover, "You need to find something as soon as possible. I cannot show units at the building when he (her African-American boyfriend) is around." After Stover agreed to move out, Hillebold allegedly said, "I have nothing against "those people," but I prefer they not live in my building."

The investigation also included several tests to determine how Hillebold treated African Americans inquiring about apartments. Hillebold told African-American callers that the security deposit was \$1,000, which is \$300 more than the amount she quoted to white testers. When asked how she knew the callers were African-American, Hillebold said she just knew it; it was "something in their speech."

The Fair Housing Act makes it illegal to discriminate against persons because of their race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability or familial status.

Housing discrimination charges heard before an administrative law judge carry a maximum civil penalty of \$11,000 for each violation for a first offense, in addition to actual damages for each complainant, injunctive or other equitable relief, and attorneys' fees. Sanctions can be more severe if a respondent has a history of housing discrimination. Parties also have the right to elect to have their cases heard in federal district court.

FHEO and its partners in the Fair Housing Initiatives Program and the Fair Housing Assistance Program investigate approximately 9,000 housing discrimination complaints annually. People who believe they are the victims of housing discrimination should contact HUD at (800) 669-9777 (voice) 800-927-9275 (TTY) or the Department of Justice at (800) 896-7743 or 202-514-4713. Additional information is available at [www.hud.gov/fairhousing](http://www.hud.gov/fairhousing) and [www.usdoj.gov](http://www.usdoj.gov).

**For more information call Shantae Goodloe at #202-708-0685.**