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## GENERAL NEWS

### DOJ Files Sexual Harassment Suit against CA Rental Property Owners

In a [press release](#) yesterday, the Department of Justice ([DOJ](#)) announced that it has filed a lawsuit against the owner and operator of rental properties in California alleging that he violated the [Fair Housing Act](#) by subjecting female residents to sexual harassment and retaliation. The lawsuit also names as defendants the co-owners of the rental properties at the relevant times.

DOJ's [complaint](#), filed in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California, alleges that the owner sexually harassed female tenants since at least 2011. According to the complaint, he offered housing-related benefits in exchange for sexual contact, made unwelcome sexual comments and advances to female tenants, entered the homes of female tenants without their permission, subjected female tenants to unwelcome touching and groping, subjected female tenants to unwelcome sexual acts and took adverse housing-related actions against female tenants who refused his sexual advances. The lawsuit seeks monetary damages to compensate persons harmed by the alleged harassment, civil penalties to vindicate the public interest and a court order barring future discrimination.

The Fair Housing Act prohibits harassment of tenants and other forms of housing discrimination because of race, sex, color, national origin, disability, religion, and familial status. In October 2017, the DOJ's Civil Rights Division [announced](#) the [Sexual Harassment in Housing Initiative](#). The initiative specifically seeks to increase the Department's efforts to protect individuals from harassment by landlords, property managers, maintenance workers, security guards, and other employees and representatives of rental property owners. Since launching the Initiative, the Department has filed 27 lawsuits alleging sexual harassment in housing and recovered over \$9.7 million for victims of such harassment.



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