

For Immediate Release

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Equal Rights Center Fair Housing and Outreach Programs Gain Support from U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

ERC recipient of \$100,000 Education and Outreach Initiative grant and **\$275,000 Private Enforcement Initiative grant**

WASHINGTON, D.C., January 21, 2010 – The Equal Rights Center (ERC), a national non-profit civil rights organization, has been awarded two separate grants from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), totaling in funds of \$375,000. The ERC will receive a \$100,000 Education and Outreach Initiative (EOI) grant, which will support a variety of education and outreach initiatives including a website redesign. And a \$275,000 Private Enforcement Initiative (PEI) grant, which will help fund the organization's civil rights testing and enforcement activities in the Washington, DC metropolitan area.

"We are honored to be the recipient of two HUD grants," said ERC Executive Director Don Kahl. "With these funds we will fulfill both the ERC's and HUD's mission of affirmatively furthering fair housing, and will continue to work collaboratively to advance civil rights for both individuals and whole communities." The ERC was also a 2009 recipient of a HUD EOI grant, which allowed the organization's outreach efforts to grow through a metro wide "Know Your Rights" public service advertisement (PSA) campaign, the distribution of 20,000 brochures, and more than twice as many outreach events as in years past.

"The grant we received from HUD in 2009 played a major part in allowing us to develop and expand our education and outreach efforts," said ERC Communications and Outreach Manager Ashley White. "2010 is shaping up to be even stronger. We really want the ERC to be accessible to all community members." The 2010 EOI grant will continue to fund "Know Your Rights" workshops to community members. It will also include the creation and printing of a new toolkit educating domestic violence counselors on how to accommodate people with disabilities.

Following the success of the 2009 PSA advertisements, the 2010 EOI grant will fund a new PSA campaign in conjunction with the Office of Human Rights. The 2010 PSA will focus on educating veterans, people with disabilities, and people who use housing vouchers on their fair housing rights. The grant will also fund a website redesign to enhance the ERC's outreach efforts. White said, "The new website layout will encourage community members to participate in spreading civil rights news, and will serve as a greater educational tool to those we work with and serve."

The ERC's PEI grant will expand the organization's civil rights testing activities. Through its fair housing testing program, the ERC is able to isolate and identify discriminatory housing practices. The testing methodologies utilized by the ERC are recognized and accepted by the civil rights community, government agencies, and federal and state courts. In 2009 the ERC conducted almost 500 civil rights tests, including national origin, accessibility, and fair housing testing. "This grant will allow the ERC to conduct more tests in our current areas of concern as well as expand our testing efforts into additional areas," said John Baker, ERC Fair Housing Program Manager. "The ERC's testing program is an integral aspect of our work to advance civil rights and creates real change, helping to improve the lives and wellbeing of many."

Through its testing initiatives the ERC has experienced success in identifying existing levels of discrimination and affecting change in a variety of areas. For example, through its accessible design and construction testing, since 2004, the ERC has caused developers to retrofit more than 33,000 apartment units nationwide, making them more accessible to people with disabilities. The ERC's testing of rental properties to determine if landlords were discriminating against Housing Choice (Section 8) Voucher holder has resulted in more than 15,000 apartment units being made available in the greater D.C. metro area.