



**SHRIVER
CENTER**

Advancing Justice and Opportunity

Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law

News Release

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**COMPLAINT FILED WITH U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN
DEVELOPMENT (HUD) CHARGES CITY OF DANVILLE, IL WITH
HOUSING DISCRIMINATION**

Complaint filed by the Shriver Center and Relman, Dane & Colfax, PLLC alleges that Danville is engaging in race discrimination by seeking to eliminate 1/3 of its subsidized housing

(CHICAGO, December 3, 2010) Four low-income African-American Illinois residents have filed a federal civil rights complaint against the City of Danville, alleging it has violated civil rights laws by embarking on a campaign to substantially reduce the supply of affordable housing in the City. The complainants, represented by the Chicago-based Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law and Relman, Dane & Colfax, a Washington D.C.-based civil rights firm, filed their HUD complaint on November 24, 2010, asking the federal agency to make a finding of discrimination and to cut off Danville's annual allocation of more than \$1 million in federal housing and community development funds because the City's actions violate the civil rights certifications it made in order to get those funds.

The complaint, available at <http://povertylaw.org/advocacy/housing/HUDComplaint.pdf>, also alleges that Danville officials cut off federal funding to area non-profits who wish to create supportive housing opportunities, and used camouflaged racial expressions about families who live in or need affordable housing in order to incite community support for its effort.

Describing the impact of Danville Mayor Scott Eisenhauer's plans to do away with much of the City's most affordable housing, Shriver Center senior attorney Katherine Walz said: "It is both illegal and illogical that Danville would seek to eliminate a third of its public housing units and rental vouchers. The City knows that those resources principally serve African-American families, and that its actions will hurt them severely. "The city has accepted federal housing and community development dollars on the condition that it will comply with civil rights laws, including a duty to affirmatively further fair housing. But Danville's actions are in direct conflict with its certifications and commitment to abide by these civil rights laws."

Danville became eligible for housing and community development funds in 2004, and since that time has been required to conduct a thorough analysis of fair housing impediments, including those experienced by African-American families, and to outline an action plan for overcoming those impediments. The complaint maintains that Danville did neither, and lied to the federal government in its annual certifications between 2004 and 2010 in order to receive more than \$6.5 million.

Seven months after making its 2010 civil rights certifications—in which it again solemnly promised HUD that it was entitled to federal funding because it had conducted an Analysis of Impediments (AI)—Danville finally completed its first AI and submitted it to HUD on October 20, describing it as a “fair and complete examination of fair housing issues in Danville, and ways we can improve it.”

In fact, according to Michael Allen, a partner with Relman, Dane & Colfax, there is no evidence that the Danville City Council ever approved it, and the document is silent about the City’s own discriminatory policies. “The new AI does not describe how the City’s plans to get rid of a substantial amount of public housing and Housing Choice Vouchers has a discriminatory impact on African-American residents,” said Allen. “Nor does it disclose how Mayor Eisenhauer refused to sign the necessary certifications to permit area social services providers to compete for federal money to house people with disabilities.”

The complaint asks that HUD find that Danville has violated the Fair Housing Act, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974. It asks that HUD deem the city’s certifications insufficient to support the receipt of Community Development Block Grants and other federal housing funds and withhold those funds until the city meets its civil rights obligations.

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The Shriver Center provides national leadership in efforts identifying, developing, and supporting creative and collaborative approaches to social and economic justice for low-income people. The Shriver Center fulfills its legal advocacy and policy development through a comprehensive set of initiatives, including representing low-income people on a variety of issues that affect their social and economic well-being and managing communications and access to poverty law strategies and policy-related information.

Relman, Dane & Colfax is a civil rights law firm based in Washington, D.C., with additional offices in Ohio and New Mexico. It litigates civil rights cases in the areas of housing, lending, employment, public accommodations, education, and police accountability. Its national practice includes individual and class action lawsuits on behalf of plaintiffs who have suffered discrimination and harassment on the basis of race, national origin, color, religion, sex, disability, age, familial status, source of income, and sexual orientation.