

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Thursday, March 12, 2015

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Attorney General Racine Outlines Policy Priorities in Speech to Group Promoting Women in Housing and Finance

Discusses Agenda for Consumer Protection, Affordable Housing

WASHINGTON, D. C. – Attorney General Karl A. Racine outlined ways he plans to better protect the District’s consumers and enforce the District’s affordable-housing laws in a speech at Women in Housing and Finance’s monthly Policy Lunch yesterday.

“According to the D.C. Fiscal Policy Institute, between 2000 and 2010, the District lost *half* of its low-cost rental units and *72 percent* of its low-value homes,” Attorney General Racine said. **“If our dramatic growth in both population and housing prices continues, it’s easy to imagine a District where not only poor people will be squeezed out, but middle-class people as well.”**

Women in Housing and Finance (WHF) is an organization devoted to promoting women in the housing and financial-services industries and discussing policy matters related to both industries. They host regular luncheons with policymakers. Previous speakers have included former Mayor Vincent C. Gray, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau Assistant Director Holly Petraeus, and Securities and Exchange Commission Commissioner Daniel Gallagher.

Affordable Housing Protection and Enforcement Initiative

The Attorney General provided an overview of his Affordable Housing Protection and Enforcement Initiative, which will equip the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) with the resources necessary to keep more District residents in their homes and bolster the District’s affordable-housing stock by:

- Increasing OAG’s capacity to enforce the District’s Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA) as well as District laws requiring set-asides of eight percent for affordable units in new developments;
- Boosting the number of civil actions filed against landlords who fail to maintain habitable units in attempts to force low-income tenants out;
- Reviewing all requests from developers for waivers from affordable-housing laws;

- Operating a tenants' complaint hotline for tenants to report instances where they believe a landlord is violating the law; and
- Working collaboratively with the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development to aggressively negotiate land sales so that the District receives the full benefit of future developments.

Consumer Protection and Community Outreach Initiative

Attorney General Racine also outlined his Consumer Protection and Community Outreach Initiative, which will leverage and build on OAG's track record of success in protecting consumers by:

- Expanding OAG's small number of attorneys and staff who handle consumer-protection matters;
- Providing them with better resources – such as high-quality software for trial prep – so that they are armed with weapons more commensurate to those of the corporate attorneys against whom they regularly square off; and
- Expanding OAG's community-outreach capacity to connect with and educate everyday consumers as well as identify scams that affect them.

WHF Information Session on Teaching Financial Empowerment to Disadvantaged Women March 17

The Attorney General encouraged OAG staff and members of the public to attend an brown-bag information session that WHF is hosting next week for those interested in volunteering to teach financial empowerment to women who live at Calvary Women's Services in Anacostia. The session will be held from 12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 17 at K&L Gates, 1601 K Street NW.

For more information on this event, other Women in Housing and Finance events, or the organization itself, visit the WHF website at <http://www.whfdc.org/>.

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