



WASHINGTON LAWYERS' COMMITTEE  
FOR CIVIL RIGHTS & URBAN AFFAIRS



**For Immediate Release**

## American Association of People With Disabilities Joins Equal Rights Center in Nationwide Suit Against Hilton Hotels Corporation

WASHINGTON, D.C., April 15, 2008 – The Equal Rights Center (ERC) was joined by the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) in filing a complaint against Hilton Hotels for the company's numerous physical barriers to people with disabilities. As a place of public accommodation, it is against federal law (the Americans with Disabilities Act) for Hilton Hotels to be inadequately accessible for people with disabilities.

“We are thrilled that AAPD has joined the ERC and Marc Fiedler in this complaint,” said Donald Kahl, Chief Operating Officer of the ERC. “By having the AAPD and its thousands of members across the country join us in this lawsuit, it sends a message to Hilton that these problems are serious and cannot be ignored.”

For more than a year, the ERC and AAPD have received complaints about Hilton Hotels not providing services for people with disabilities, as required by law. As a result of the complaints, the ERC surveyed Hilton Hotels in several states and the District of Columbia for accessibility.

“We tried very hard to prevent this lawsuit,” commented Rabbi Bruce E. Kahn, the ERC Executive Director. “We told Hilton it had compliance problems and offered to work with Hilton to get the areas of noncompliance fully identified and corrected. We were ignored, and so we proceeded with our investigation. Perhaps Hilton will now decide to do what is right.”

This national investigation of Hilton-owned and managed hotels demonstrates that Hilton Hotels, one of the most recognized name in the global lodging industry, has numerous systemic barriers in its parking areas, lobbies, elevators, restaurants, bars and individual rooms, throughout its hotel chain.

Plaintiff Marc Fiedler experienced first hand the barriers at Hilton Hotels. Fiedler, who uses a wheelchair, attempted to book a wheelchair-accessible room at the Hilton Oceanfront Resort in Hilton Head, South Carolina. He asked to stay in a room with a view of the ocean, but was informed by a reservations representative that none of the rooms with an ocean view are wheelchair-accessible.

“I'm delighted that AAPD will be joining the ERC and me as plaintiffs in this important lawsuit,” Fiedler said. “In light of the nationwide scope of the access-law violations at Hilton Hotels, it is certainly

--more--



**WASHINGTON LAWYERS' COMMITTEE  
FOR CIVIL RIGHTS & URBAN AFFAIRS**



appropriate to now have involved in the litigation AAPD, one of the preeminent organizations of people with disabilities in the United States.”

“People with disabilities have the right to expect reasonable and equal access to places of public accommodation, like Hilton Hotels,” Kahl said. “Not only is it unacceptable to provide unequal treatment to someone because of his or her disability, but it is also against the law.”

“The disability community is tired of inconsistent and unreliable accessibility at leading hotel chains like Hilton,” said Andrew J. Imparato, AAPD President and CEO. “More than 17 years after the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, disabled people have a right to expect compliance with accessibility

requirements and consistency as we travel around the U.S. We hope this case sends a clear message that the status quo is unacceptable and that the case produces dramatic improvements in the commitment and performance of the Hilton hotel chain and the industry more broadly in providing equal access for customers with disabilities.”

This year the Equal Rights Center is celebrating 25 years of protecting civil rights. Originally established in 1983 as the Fair Housing Council of Greater Washington, the ERC focused on educating and counseling the public on all forms of discrimination in housing. Joining with the Fair Employment Council of Greater Washington in 1999, the ERC is a private, not-for-profit, civil rights agency that is the product of mergers with the Fair Employment Council of Greater Washington in 1999 and the Disability Rights Council in 2005. The ERC is dedicated to identifying, challenging, and eliminating discrimination in housing, employment, public accommodations, and government services through education, research, testing, counseling, enforcement and advocacy. For more information please go to [www.equalrightscenter.org](http://www.equalrightscenter.org) or call the Equal Rights Center at 202.234.3062.

AAPD is a non-profit organization that represents tens of thousands of people with disabilities throughout the United States. AAPD works to provide a unified voice for all people with disabilities with a goal of full inclusion into American society.

The Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs was established in 1968 to provide pro bono legal services to address issues of discrimination and entrenched poverty. Since its founding, the Committee has handled more than 5,000 cases on behalf of individuals and advocacy organizations in the areas of equal employment, fair housing, public accommodations, public education, asylum and refugee rights, and disability rights. For more information about the Committee, see [www.washlaw.org](http://www.washlaw.org). The Committee can be reached at 202.319.1000.

--more--



**WASHINGTON LAWYERS' COMMITTEE  
FOR CIVIL RIGHTS & URBAN AFFAIRS**



For more information contact:

Donald Kahl, 202.234.3062  
Chief Operating Officer, Equal Rights Center  
[dkahl@equalrightscenter.org](mailto:dkahl@equalrightscenter.org)

E. Elaine Gardner, 202.319.1000 ext. 131  
Disability Rights Project Director, Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs  
[Elaine\\_Gardner@washlaw.org](mailto:Elaine_Gardner@washlaw.org)

Mariana V. Nork, 202.457.0046 ext. 24  
Senior Vice President for Development and Communications, American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD)  
[aapdmvn@aol.com](mailto:aapdmvn@aol.com)

###