



WASHINGTON LAWYERS' COMMITTEE
FOR CIVIL RIGHTS AND URBAN AFFAIRS

For Immediate Release

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The Equal Rights Center and Johnny Rockets Restaurants Work to Increase Accessibility for People with Disabilities

WASHINGTON, D.C., November 10, 2009 –The Equal Rights Center (ERC), a national non-profit civil rights organization, Robert Herman, and Johnny Rockets Group Inc., an international restaurant chain based in Lake Forest, California, with both company-owned and franchise restaurants, announced yesterday their agreement and initiative to make Johnny Rockets' locations and services more accessible to people with disabilities.

“People with disabilities should not be required to deal with barriers, embarrassment or disparate services as they conduct their day-to-day activities, like eating at a restaurant,” said Don Kahl, Executive Director of the ERC. “We applaud Johnny Rockets for its sensitivity to these issues and its willingness to work to improve this community’s access to its restaurant and services. A restaurant that believes in providing ‘food, fun and friendliness reminiscent of feel-good Americana’ has just taken a huge step in opening its doors to thousands of individuals with disabilities.”

Herman, an ERC member who uses a wheelchair, approached the ERC after he was unable to enter a Johnny Rockets in Washington D.C. The ERC commenced its own investigation of several Johnny Rockets' locations and found many accessibility issues that were contrary to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the federal law which requires places of public accommodation to be accessible to people with disabilities.

Herman and the ERC, represented by the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights & Urban Affairs(WLC) and the international law firm of Morrison and Foerster, filed suit against Johnny Rockets for failing to provide accessible dining to persons with disabilities, thus violating the ADA. Johnny Rockets immediately began addressing the issues raised by the ERC and Herman.

“The ability to access places of public accommodations like restaurants is a big part of what the Americans with Disabilities Act set out to achieve,” said WLC Disability Project Director, Elaine Gardner. “Johnny Rockets is to be commended for promptly addressing the issues faced

by its customers with disabilities, and for its commitment to those customers.”

Under this agreement, Johnny Rockets will make all necessary modifications to their policies, practices and procedures to ensure their restaurants comply with both the ADA and any state or local laws addressing the rights of people with disabilities. Johnny Rockets also will actively work with its franchisees to ensure that all locations are in compliance with the law and honor the rights of people with disabilities when accessing its restaurants. The specific D.C. location that Herman was unable to enter will also be altered to include a route into its restaurant that complies with the ADA. Johnny Rockets has also agreed to a payment to Herman and the ERC for their damages and attorneys’ fees.

About the Equal Rights Center (www.equalrightscenter.org)

Since 1983, the Equal Rights Center (ERC), a national non-profit civil rights organization, has worked to identify, challenge, and eliminate discrimination. The ERC combats discrimination in housing, employment, access to public accommodations and government services, disability rights and immigrant rights, through education and outreach, research, testing, counseling, advocacy and enforcement.

About the Washington Lawyers’ Committee (www.washlaw.org)

Founded in 1968 by leaders of the private bar in the District of Columbia, the Washington Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs is a private nonprofit organization working with volunteer attorneys to provide pro bono legal representation in civil rights cases and poverty matters.