



WASHINGTON LAWYERS' COMMITTEE
FOR CIVIL RIGHTS AND URBAN AFFAIRS



For Immediate Release

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Report Finds Taxicabs Discriminating Against 60% of Individuals with Service Dogs

WASHINGTON, D.C., September 1, 2010 —Today the [Equal Rights Center](#), the [Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs](#), and [Hogan Lovells US LLP](#) released a report "[No Dogs Allowed; Discrimination by D.C. Taxicabs Against People Who Use Service Dogs](#)" uncovering a 60% rate of discrimination against individuals who use service animals when attempting to hail a cab.

“With tens of thousands of individuals with visual disabilities either living in or visiting the District, the continued widespread discrimination against people using service dogs by taxicab drivers in the District is unacceptable,” said Don Kahl, Equal Rights Center Executive Director. “We hope this report will move the District government, political candidates, and our community leaders to focus on and rectify the stain of discrimination against people with disabilities on the reputation of the nation’s capital.”

After receiving numerous complaints from ERC members and collaborative partners who use service dogs and had experienced refusals of service by D.C. taxi cabs, the ERC launched an investigation into taxi discrimination against individuals who use service dogs. In the spring of 2010, [the ERC conducted 30 tests in D.C. encompassing 15 zip codes and 3 of the District’s quadrants](#). Each test included two individuals—one with a service dog and one without—standing on the same side of a block attempting to hail a cab. In 60% of these tests, the blind tester with a service dog was subjected to at least one form of discriminatory treatment.

“The ADA was enacted to help break down barriers those with disabilities face everyday; and access to public services, like taxicabs, is an integral form of transportation for thousands in the District,” said Elaine Gardner, Disability Rights Project Director at the Washington Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs. “Based on the findings of this investigation, it is evident that action must be taken to address this serious problem and end discrimination against individuals who use guide dogs.”

This form of discrimination violates both the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and D.C. Human Rights Act (DCHRA). The ADA requires those providing services to the public to make modifications in rules and policies to provide an equal service and the DCHRA insures that these

protections are reflected in D.C.'s local law. Fully applicable to all private taxi companies in the District, these laws require taxicab drivers to allow service dogs in their vehicles and prohibit them from charging a surcharge, higher fare, or extra fee for transporting a service dog.

“This report uncovered an appalling rate of illegal discrimination against those using service dogs,” said Dana Boehm, of Hogan Lovells. “As the capital of a nation that united in our celebration of the 20th anniversary of the ADA this year, we hope the District government and leaders take necessary steps to become a leader in protecting civil rights of all individuals.”

In order to address and end the discrimination, the report suggests increasing enforcement efforts and penalties for discrimination; requiring additional training for taxicab company owners, taxi drivers, and taxi company employees who deal with the public; and stepped up and regular compliance monitoring.

To download a PDF of the report, visit

http://www.equalrightscenter.org/site/DocServer/Taxicab_Report.pdf?docID=242

To view an accessible version of the report visit, www.equalrightscenter.org/nodogsaccess

To view video footage from the investigation, visit www.equalrightscenter.org/medialibrary

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

Originally formed in 1983, the Equal Rights Center (ERC) is a national non-profit civil rights organization based in Washington, D.C. With members located in 33 states and the District of Columbia, the ERC works nationally to promote equal opportunity in housing, employment, disability rights, immigrant rights, and access to public accommodations and government services for all protected classes under federal, state, and local laws.

About the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs (<http://www.washlaw.org/>)

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. The Committee can be reached at 202.319.1000.