

The Equal Rights Center

2012 Annual Report



Advancing civil rights for all



The Equal Rights Center (ERC) is a national non-profit civil rights organization dedicated to promoting equal opportunity in housing, employment, public accommodations, and government services. With 6,000 members across the country, the ERC has worked for 30 years to identify, address and remedy both individual instances of discrimination, as well as large-scale, systematic discrimination nationwide.



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From the ERC Board President

Change and Continuity: for me, these two words describe the extraordinary achievements of, and challenges facing, the Equal Rights Center (ERC) in 2012.

First, Change. After 30 years of distinguished service and inspired leadership, Reverend Dr. James Macdonell stepped down as president of the Board of Directors of the ERC. Though it can sound like a cliché, in this case it is true: Jim will be a hard act to follow. As an ERC Board Member since the 1999 merger of the Fair Housing Council and the Fair Employment Council that created the ERC, I have learned much from Jim and my fellow Board colleagues. I am humbled by the opportunity to serve as President of the Board and will certainly do my best to lead the Board as it works with the remarkable ERC staff to advocate for the equal rights for all.

Change is also evident in the nature of civil rights enforcement in 2012. It is hard to believe that August 2013 will mark 50 years since the March on Washington. In 1963, civil rights meant the struggle to recognize the basic rights of African-Americans—to vote, work, obtain housing, and attend school. We have come a long way since those times, and have made real progress in rooting out racial discrimination.

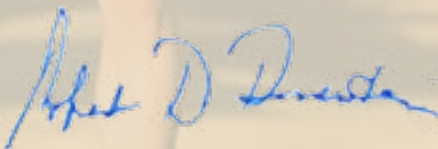
But discrimination against African-Americans remains, and we have expanded our horizons to identify new groups subject to discrimination—women, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, immigrants, LGBT individuals—as well as new forms of discrimination—inaccessible medical equipment for people with

disabilities, housing discrimination based on source of income, and more. Addressing these issues requires commitment, creativity, perseverance and vision. I am proud to say that the ERC has all of these qualities in great measure.

There was a time when civil rights enforcement primarily meant filing a lawsuit against those who discriminated. While the ERC remains committed to the use of litigation when necessary, and continues to work closely with our colleagues at the Washington Lawyers' Committee, today's ERC uses education and outreach, research and publications, sponsored conferences and media involvement to position itself at the cutting edge of civil rights work. Most importantly, to stop discrimination before it takes place, the ERC is actively involved in creating proactive partnerships with business and industry through its Corporate Partnerships and Training Program and the Multi-Family Housing Resource Program.

And that brings us to continuity. The ERC is fortunate to have sound, stable leadership at both the Board and staff levels. It remains committed to the use of civil rights testing to uncover all forms of discrimination, whether subtle or blatant. It has maintained its commitment to achieving equality for groups subject to historic discrimination even as it has expanded into the new frontiers. There is still much work to be done, and I can assure you that the ERC is dedicated to doing it, and doing it well.

Cordially,



Robert D. Dinerstein
Equal Rights Center Board President

From the ERC Executive Director

Past, present, and future converged for the Equal Rights Center in 2012. Throughout the year, we were keenly aware that 2012 represented the 30th year of the ERC's work in civil rights and great strides were made to keep the ERC at the forefront of advocacy, action, and impact for the next 30 years.

Reflecting upon our past, we took pride in our humble beginnings as a local fair housing organization with a part-time executive director and a borrowed office in the back of a local pharmacy. Yet, times changed, the face of civil rights changed, and so too did the ERC. As you will read on page 24, we honored that past, and our progress, with a 30th Anniversary Celebration in April. Past met future at that event when the Rev. Dr. James G. Macdonell stepped down after 30 years as Board President, passing leadership to long-time disability rights lawyer and advocate Robert Dinerstein.

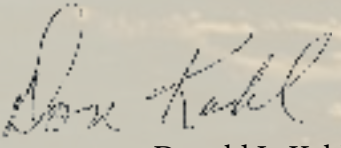
As for the present, the ERC today has 6,000 members, a diverse professional staff, and more than 300 civil rights testers, making a national impact across a wide range of civil rights issues. And in 2012, the ERC achieved many civil rights successes:

- Working independently, with government agencies, and with some of the nation's most respected civil rights organizations, the ERC conducted nearly 2,000 tests all across the country;
- Publishing two investigative reports, a self-advocacy toolkit, an accessible housing field guide, and collaborating with television, radio and print media on scores of occasions, the ERC shone a bright light on issues of discrimination;
- Continuing to expand our education and outreach programs by participating in more than 170 educational events, in seven languages, and distributing more than 55,000 civil rights materials;

- Working collaboratively with business and industry to try to prevent discrimination before it occurs, our Corporate Partnerships & Training (CPT) Program worked with the nation's largest single family housing developer, national retail chains, restaurateurs, and property management companies on accessibility and fair housing issues to show that equal access for all is smart business;
- Expanding our unique Multifamily Housing Resource Program to 12 national apartment developers and accessibility experts, who work with the ERC to make hundreds of thousands of apartments and condominiums more accessible for people with disabilities; and
- Advocating successfully in various contexts to protect the rights of individual victims of discrimination, promote the expansion of protections under federal, state and local laws, and address critical civil right issues affecting people with disabilities, immigrant communities, and families for whom a housing subsidy is all that stands between them and homelessness.

But, we know too well that there is much that remains to be done—and that is our future. The growth in the number of hate groups and hate crimes targeting Muslim and Sikh communities, the unavoidable discrimination against Latinos engendered by the immigration reform debate, and the continuing struggle of LGBT individuals and families to achieve equal treatment under the law, are stark reminders that the ERC is needed now more than ever.

We gladly accept this challenge, and we hope that you will too, by joining us for our next 30 years of advancing equal opportunity for all.



Donald L. Kahl
Equal Rights Center Executive Director



The ERC Advancing Civil Rights for All

The ERC employs a multifaceted approach to promote equal opportunity in housing, employment, and access to public accommodations and government services that relies on its 30 years of civil rights experience.

Through its efforts to promote equal opportunity for all, the ERC continues to champion an ever-growing number of groups targeted for discrimination. In addition to its dedicated programs in disability rights and immigrant rights, the ERC provides focused attention on discrimination against the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) community, Housing Choice Voucher holders, families with children, and survivors of domestic violence.

Through education, research, testing, advocacy, collaboration, and enforcement, coupled with a commitment to innovation and creating lasting impact, the ERC combines both time-tested and groundbreaking approaches to advancing civil rights at both the individual and systemic levels.

ERC MEMBERSHIP

Throughout the ERC's 30 year history, it has sought out, and been guided by, input from the communities it serves. Since becoming a membership organization in 2006, the ERC has exponentially expanded its ability to

identify discrimination at the earliest possible moment, and to work proactively to address discrimination. In 2012, the ERC membership continued to grow and diversify. Over the course of the year, ERC membership expanded by 43 percent, with more than 5,500 members located in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and 14 foreign countries.

As the 'eyes, ears and voice' of the ERC, its enthusiastic members help expand education and outreach efforts to new communities, identify emerging issues of discrimination, assist in the implementation of investigations, and provide much-needed financial support for the ERC.

As membership has grown, the ERC has utilized technology to ensure it remains connected to all its members. In 2012, for the first time, the ERC provided an online option for members around the country to attend its annual members meeting via teleconference. Members across the country were able to watch as Mary Jane Owen, ERC member and disability rights advocate, was presented with the ERC Directors' Award for Civil Rights and Advocacy.

INTAKES AND ADVOCACY

Receiving and responding to complaints from

individuals who experience discrimination is a critical part of the ERC's work. Intakes not only document individual incidents of discrimination, but often provide anecdotal information about patterns of more widespread, systemic discrimination. In 2012, the ERC received and responded to 392 complaints from individuals raising a variety of civil rights issues.

In addition to advising individuals on their rights and the avenues of relief available to them, the ERC actively advocates on individuals' behalf to resolve discriminatory treatment through a variety of measures, including: communicating directly with the discriminating party; helping prepare filings with appropriate administrative agencies; investigating the extent of the problem; advocating for systemic policy change; or, as a last resource, taking enforcement action. The majority of ERC intakes are resolved informally, through information and advocacy provided by ERC staff.

COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH

Working across all program areas, the ERC's Communication and Outreach Program raises public awareness about discrimination, helping to create positive change, often before an individual complaint is made.

These efforts take a variety of forms, including trainings and workshops, publication of informational materials, earned media, online outreach, and social media.

MEDIA

The ERC uses a variety of both traditional and new media channels to reach the communities it serves. Through letters to the editor, media interviews, published reports, and press releases, in 2012, the ERC brought pressing issues of discrimination into the public forum, and reached millions of individuals through television, radio, and print journalism.

In 2012, the ERC secured earned media, reaching audiences of Americans across the country through the Washington Post, New York Times, Portland Daily Sun, Washington Examiner, Washington Business Journal, Washington City Paper, Multifamily Executive Magazine, NBC4, Associated Press, WWLTV, New Orleans Times-Picayune, Fox News Latino, Legal Times, and Street Sense.

PSA CAMPAIGNS

In 2012, the ERC released three PSA campaigns to help educate the public.



Following the success of the ERC’s housing accessibility PSA campaign, “What is WRONG with these Pictures,” in 2012, the ERC collaborated with the D.C. Office of Human Rights (DCOHR) to launch a similar online campaign that sought to raise awareness about “visability,” a movement that promotes increased accessibility in single family homes (which are not covered by the Fair Housing Act or its accessibility requirements).

In the fall, the ERC ran its “Love Thy Neighbor” campaign, which focused on housing discrimination against same-sex couples in the D.C. metro area (see page 10). The ERC also ran a campaign that highlighted the services provided by the ERC’s Immigrant Rights Program through public service announcement on several Washington, D.C., metropolitan area radio stations (see page 21).

ONLINE OUTREACH AND SOCIAL MEDIA

As society becomes increasingly connected through social networking and online forums, the ERC is committed to engaging its members and supporters in these media to identify and discuss important topics. In 2012, the ERC expanded its multimedia offerings, working with EFX Media to produce a promotional video, as well as creating a series of housing-related informational videos. With 57 new original posts, the ERC’s blog, *For Civil Minds*, continued to be a growing point of communication, and overall web-traffic to the blog increased by 268 percent. The ERC’s social media presence also expanded the ERC’s reach in 2012, with the ERC’s Twitter followers growing by 47 percent, and its Facebook followers increasing by 17 percent.

TRAININGS

Through workshops and trainings, symposia, and networking events, the ERC reaches thousands of people each year, educating individuals on their civil rights and empowering them to take action. The ERC offers “Know Your Rights” workshops to community groups, and civil rights training to advocates and government officials. These workshops explain civil rights law, give examples of individuals’ rights under the law, provide self-advocacy tips, and offer the ERC as a resource when discrimination occurs.

The ERC distributes thousands of informational mate-

rials at these events, often in a variety of languages to further reach traditionally underserved populations. In 2012, the ERC increased outreach events by 40 percent, conducting and participating in 177 outreach events, educating more than 6,000 community members, and distributing more than 55,000 educational brochures and toolkits.

TESTING AND RESEARCH

At the core of the ERC’s success in promoting civil rights is its three decades of experience in civil rights testing. Through a variety of innovative testing techniques, the ERC is a national leader in identifying and documenting differences in the quality, quantity, and content of information and services provided to individuals based on individual factors and characteristics. Through this testing process, the nature and extent of illegal discrimination can be ascertained.

Testing continued to be a centerpiece of the ERC’s work in 2012, with the ERC doubling its testing activities, completing more than 1,600 civil rights tests to uncover systemic discrimination. In order to support this high level of testing, the ERC’s Testing Program increased its pool of active testers to more than 300 individuals who have been vetted and trained to serve as testers in a wide range of ERC investigations. Through the use of web-based technology, the ERC expanded its national testing capabilities by implementing a nationwide remote tester-training program.

Based on its testing work in 2012, the ERC published two investigative reports, documenting rates of housing discrimination against individuals using guide dogs, and individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing (see page 17) .

COLLABORATIONS

The ERC regularly collaborates with government entities, allied organizations, business and industry, and others to address both established and emerging civil rights issues. By conducting staff trainings, reviewing policies, advising on “best practices,” and providing quality control testing for compliance with civil rights laws, the ERC works directly with both the private and public sectors to prevent discrimination before it occurs.

The ERC’s newest program, the Corporate Partnerships and Training (CPT) Program, continued in 2012 to be a trailblazer in proactively promoting civil rights through collaborations with industry and non-profit leaders. In 2012, the ERC grew existing partnerships, and established new relationships with partners including The Community Partnership, Dreyfuss Management, NCLR, NVR, Inc., Panera Bread, Prudential PenFed Realty, Pret a Manger, the Southern Poverty Law Center, and WHH Trice & Co.

The ERC’s groundbreaking Multifamily Housing Resource Program (MHRP), a membership program for housing industry leaders within the ERC’s CPT Program, continues to grow, adding The JBG Companies in 2012 (see page 14). The MHRP works proactively with the housing industry to increase the stock of America’s accessible housing, and to show that focusing on equal opportunity is not only the right thing to do, it is also smart business.

The ERC is equally proud of its strong relationships with federal and local government agencies as well as private foundations. In 2012, the ERC continued testing and outreach activities under its three-year performance based Private Enforcement Initiative grant, two Education and Outreach Initiatives grants, and one of the inaugural Limited English Proficiency Initiative grants from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The ERC also expanded its collaborations with the District of Columbia Office of Human Rights, and the Fairfax County (VA) Office of Human Rights and Equity Programs, providing education and outreach, and civil rights testing expertise. The ERC also received private foundation grants from The Herb Block Foundation, the Retirement Research Foundation and the Morris & Gwedolyn Cafritz Foundation in 2012.

ENFORCEMENT

In some instances, civil rights violations can only be effectively addressed and redressed through enforcement. When education and outreach, collaboration, and advocacy efforts are not sufficient to end discriminatory practices, the ERC collaborates with the Washington Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs and a host of national law firms to secure needed change through administrative agencies and the courts.

In 2012, the ERC resolved a variety of enforcement matters, including three FHA Accessible Design & Construction (housing) matters, two ADA public accommodations cases, and six source of income (housing choice voucher) matters. These efforts have resulted in 60,000 apartment and condominium units across the country being made more accessible for people with disabilities; more than 55,000 retail stores, restaurants, and hotels nationwide being made more accessible to people with disabilities; and more than 17,500 apartment units being opened to voucher holders.

In 2012, civil rights-minded law firms and attorneys donated more than \$3.8 million in pro-bono services to the ERC’s activities.





The ERC Fair Housing Program

An individual’s ability to obtain adequate and safe housing of their choice affects all aspects of daily life – employment and educational opportunities, proximity to friends and family, availability of public transportation, access to commercial and government services, and even safety. In addition to limiting these important measures of quality of life, housing discrimination also reinforces patterns of residential segregation and poverty, and harms society by denying all residents, and potential residents, the opportunity to live and learn in a culturally diverse community. Yet housing discrimination continues to be a pervasive problem nationwide with an estimated 4 million incidents of housing discrimination occurring each year.

Founded 30 years ago as the Fair Housing Council of Greater Washington, the ERC’s Fair Housing Program today remains at the forefront of addressing housing discrimination. To address barriers to equal housing opportunity, the Fair Housing Program conducts education and outreach, individual and systemic investigations, and advocates on behalf of its members and others who have experienced housing discrimination. Special attention is focused on identifying and addressing emerging issues, such as discrimination, against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals, Housing Choice Voucher holders, and immigrant communities.

ADVOCACY AND OUTREACH

In order to maximize the advancement of equal housing opportunity and create a movement with like-minded advocates, the ERC engages with government and community stakeholders, encouraging fair housing education, programs, and the implementation of fair housing laws.

The ERC received approximately 390 individual intakes in 2012, of which 127 were Fair Housing related. The ERC worked with many of these individuals on a wide range of housing related concerns, bringing many of their complaints to quick and positive resolutions.

Protected Class	Rental	Sales	Lending	Total
Age	4			4
Disability	50	10	1	61
Familial Status	5			5
Family Responsibility	1			1
Gender Identity	1			1
Marital Status	1			1
National Origin	8	2		10
Place of Residence	2	1		3
Race	12			12
Religion	1	1		2
Sex	1	1		2
Sexual Orientation	2			2
Source of Income	24			24
Total	112	14	1	127

INVESTIGATIONS

Continued Partnership with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

Based on the ERC’s record of success in advancing fair housing, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) continued to support the ERC in 2012. In 2012, the ERC entered into the second year of a three-year performance based Private Enforcement Initiative (PEI) grant (\$975,000). HUD also awarded grants to both the District of Columbia Office of Human Rights (DCOHR), and the Fairfax County (VA) Office of Human Rights and Equity Programs to work with the ERC to advance fair housing through education, outreach, and civil rights testing. HUD’s support through these grants has created a strong foundation for the ERC to expand its fair housing outreach, connect with new communities, increase intakes and referrals, and expand its testing initiatives.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

The District’s 11th Annual Fair Housing Symposium

In 2012, as in prior years, the ERC joined with DCOHR and the D.C. Department of Housing and Community Development to present the District of Columbia’s 11th Annual Fair Housing Symposium. Held during April—Fair Housing Month— this event featured District

Mayor Vincent Gray, other government speakers, and leaders from various housing advocacy groups. Panels addressed a variety of current topics including: fair housing barriers in the nation’s capital, the integration of the disability community into mainstream housing through housing accessibility requirements, and equal housing opportunities for members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community.

Fairfax County (VA) Fair Housing Luncheon

Also during Fair Housing Month, the ERC joined the Fairfax County Office of Human Rights and Equity Programs at their 2012 Fair Housing Luncheon. Thomas Perez, Assistant Attorney General for the U.S. Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division gave the keynote address and the ERC presented a fair housing training to attendees.

PSA Campaign: “Visitability”

To raise awareness of the need for accessibility in more types of housing, the ERC collaborated with DCOHR to launch a popular and informative PSA campaign on the concept of “visitability.” The visitability movement seeks to have all new single-family homes and small apartment buildings not covered by the FHA include three specific accessible features (accessible entrances, doorways and ground floor bathrooms) that will allow



individuals with disabilities to visit family, friends, and others in their place of residence. Posters of the campaign were strategically placed at bus shelters across the District of Columbia. The campaign’s website included a quiz about visitability, as well as resources to learn more.

This campaign built on the ERC’s 2011 accessibility campaign “What is WRONG with these Pictures,” that challenged people to test their knowledge about accessibility.



PSA Campaign: “Love Thy Neighbor”

The D.C. Human Rights Act prohibits discrimination in the nation’s capital against potential renters or buyers

based on sexual orientation and gender identity, yet the LGBT community continues to face blatant discriminatory practices when attempting to rent or buy a home. While the federal Fair Housing Act does not directly protect against discrimination based on sexual orientation, HUD has recognized this as a serious problem, and issued a rule in February 2012 prohibiting this type of discrimination in HUD owned or financed housing.

In September, the ERC sponsored a PSA campaign, “Love Thy Neighbor,” focused on housing discrimination against same sex couples. Reaching millions of readers through the Washington Post, the Post Express, and Street Sense, this campaign sought to educate LGBT Washingtonians about their fair housing rights, and to encourage them to seek assistance through the ERC if they experience discrimination.

ENFORCEMENT

Protecting the right to equal housing opportunity sometimes requires enforcement of fair housing laws through administrative or judicial intervention. When education and advocacy efforts are not successful, the ERC collaborates with federal and local enforcement agencies, the Washington Lawyers’ Committee for Civil

Rights and Urban Affairs, and the private legal bar to hold those who discriminate in housing accountable.

Accessible Design and Construction

Throughout 2012, the ERC continued its accessible design and construction initiative, resulting in agreements with two major multifamily housing developers to make nearly 1,000 apartment units more accessible to people with disabilities. Since beginning our accessible housing initiative nine years ago, the ERC has reached agreements with 19 national, regional and local multifamily development companies, resulting in the alteration of 60,000 apartment and condominium units at more than 200 complexes in 18 states and the District of Columbia, to make them more accessible to people with disabilities.

Source of Income

Since 2004, the ERC has monitored housing providers in the greater Washington, D.C., metropolitan area to measure compliance with source of income laws, and has reached agreements with more than 25 landlords and property managers, opening more than 17,500 apartment units to voucher holders. In 2012, the ERC resolved six source of income matters, resulting in hundreds of additional apartment units being opened to Housing Choice Voucher holders.

The ERC and Level One, Inc., a national apartment leasing call center, reached an agreement resolving concerns that Housing Choice Voucher holders were provided with inaccurate information about the availability of apartments owned and managed by Level One’s clients. As a result of the agreement, Level One will ensure that all of its agents answering rental calls for properties located in the District of Columbia, and in Howard and Montgomery Counties in Maryland advise potential renters that vouchers are accepted for the payment of rent. Level One has also agreed to strengthen its existing fair housing policies and to provide additional fair housing training to employees.

In August, the ERC filed a lawsuit against D.C. landlord Theophilus LLC, alleging that it violated both local and federal law by discriminating against Housing Choice Voucher holders and people with disabilities in its advertising on the web-based listing service Craigslist.com. The advertisement stated: “Sorry not accepting vouchers” and “Professional working need only apply.”



“We at HUD see ERC as a valuable partner, a trusted institution, and as one where their success will mean the success of many American communities and families across the country.”

John Trasviña, Former Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development



The ERC Corporate Partnerships and Training Program

Twenty years ago, the concepts of “triple bottom line,” and “corporate social responsibility” were considered novel, but in today’s global marketplace these concepts are becoming standard. Many companies are taking the initiative to incorporate principles of corporate responsibility into their business practices. The ERC’s Corporate Partnerships and Training (CPT) Program builds relationships with business and industry leaders to make equal access and opportunity for all an integral part of the corporate culture. Building on the success of the ERC’s Multifamily Housing Resource Program (MHRP), the CPT Program broadens our reach and impact with the corporate sector, and exemplifies the ERC’s goal of proactively engaging stakeholders to prevent discrimination before it occurs.

The ERC’s ever-growing group of corporate partners includes large, national companies such as AvalonBay, Camden Property Trust, Gables Residential, Greystar, NVR, Inc., Panera Bread Co., Pret A Manger, Prudential PenFed Realty, and TJX, Inc. Collectively, the ERC’s partners have a profound effect on the everyday lives of millions of people. Current ERC partners employ more than 200,000 individuals, serve millions of patrons each day, and significantly contribute to the U.S. economy through their gross revenues of nearly \$30 billion in 2012 alone.

Training initiatives are an integral part of all CPT

partnerships. In addition to traditional in-person training sessions, the CPT Program utilizes e-learning segments and webinars to reach its partners’ employees all across the country. The ERC’s work with its partners goes far beyond trainings, with CPT staff reviewing partners’ operating policies and protocols, advertising content, and online materials to ensure that they are effectively and efficiently complying with civil rights laws, and promoting equal opportunity for all.

By working collaboratively, the ERC helps its corporate partners improve existing policies, adopt “best practices” consistent with each partner’s business model, employ effective communication strategies that accurately reflect the diverse consumer market, and prevent discrimination before it occurs. The activities and services of the CPT Program are critical for the advancement of civil rights and are “value added” for all companies. By strengthening its relationships with the private sector, the ERC promotes equal opportunity in ways that make good business sense.

THE MULTIFAMILY HOUSING RESOURCE PROGRAM

The CPT Program’s earliest and largest project is the Multifamily Housing Resource Program (MHRP). The MHRP is a collaborative membership program

dedicated to assisting multifamily housing developers comply with federal, state and local accessibility requirements, and to increasing the number of accessible apartments and condominiums in the United States. MHRP members are industry leaders in the areas of multifamily housing development, construction, management, as well as architectural firms with design expertise, accessibility-related product or service vendors, and subcontractors.

From its founding in 2008 through the end of 2012, the MHRP grew to include 13 developers representing nearly 600,000 apartments and condominiums across the country, and 2 architectural design firms. These industry leaders serve as a model for the housing industry, and give tens of thousands of people with disabilities across the nation the

opportunity to live where they choose.

Trammell Crow Residential Completes Housing Initiative

In 2008, the ERC and Trammell Crow Residential (TCR), a national developer of apartments and condominiums, founded the MHRP. Through its foresight, commitment to accessible housing, and proactive partnership with the ERC, TCR has worked to improve

The MHRP has its own
Annual Report, with further
details about the
program members, activities,
accomplishments and
structure. To view this Report,
visit the ERC’s website:
www.equalrightscenter.org



accessibility at more than 4,500 of their existing housing units. In 2012, TCR successfully completed this initiative, finishing work at 20 apartment complexes located in nine states: Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Massachusetts, Nevada, North Carolina, Oregon, and Texas. The ERC congratulates Trammell Crow Residential on its tremendous commitment and work in promoting accessible housing, and making its homes a more welcome place for all.

New Members

In 2012, the MHRP welcomed new developer member, The JBG Companies. Founded in 1960, JBG is a leader in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area real estate market with a focus on urban, transit-oriented developments. JBG's portfolio includes more than 21 million square feet of office, residential, hotel and retail space, including 4,500 multifamily apartment units.

Fair Housing Act Best Practices Handbook

In the spring of 2012, collaborating with MHRP member Steven Winter Associates, Inc., the ERC released the "Fair Housing Act Best Practice Handbook: A Guide to Accessible Design and Construction Compliance." The handbook outlines accessibility requirements for multifamily housing, and highlights commonly occurring issues encountered during the design and construction of apartments and condominiums subject to the Fair Housing Act (FHA). The handbook provides practical solutions for addressing these issues through "lessons learned" by seasoned accessibility professionals in the field.

CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS

The ERC's proactive approach to working with business and industry to incorporate civil rights laws and values into their policies, practices, and culture has made our services increasingly sought after by more and more companies. Building on existing partnerships with companies like NVR, Inc., and Panera Bread Co., in 2012, the ERC began new partnerships with Dreyfuss Management, a property management firm headquartered in Maryland, Greystar Real Estate Partners, the nation's largest apartment management company, Pret A Manger, an international sandwich retail chain with more than 40 locations in the U.S., Prudential PenFed Realty, a real estate broker company providing services in the Mid-Atlantic, and WHH Trice & Co., an apartment management company headquartered in Virginia.

Member Training, E-learning and Webinars

Training initiatives are an integral part of all CPT partnerships. The CPT Program provides in-person training sessions, e-learning segments, and webinars, to convey information. ERC training sessions are tailored to individual partner's business model and needs, and cover a wide array of topics, including federal, state and local accessibility issues, the intersection of customer service and civil rights requirements, and sensitivity and diversity issues. The CPT training model uses participatory learning designs such as videos, role plays, and group activities, and turns knowledge into practical application utilizing real life examples, lecture, discussions, and participant handbooks. In 2012, the ERC led 35 in-person trainings for its members at a wide variety of locations across the country.

In addition to its commitment to in-person training, the MHRP utilizes emerging technologies to offer a range of training options that can reach even more members. In 2012, the MHRP introduced its second e-learning segment, General Fair Housing: Policies and Procedures, covering fair housing fundamentals, and providing best practices for implementing these principles on a day-to-day basis. The e-learning format allows MHRP members and their respective staffs the ability to access training on their own schedules, and to download and print useful materials.

Quarterly, MHRP webinars provide further professional development opportunities in fair housing and accessibility for members and their staffs. Webinars offered in 2012 included: "Reasonable Accommodations and Modifications," "The Visitability Movement," "Effective Communication in Housing - How to Comply with Federal and Local Fair Housing Requirements," and "The FHA and ADA: Where Accessibility Regulations Apply." All MHRP webinars are archived on the password-protected MHRP website for easy-access to members at their convenience.

In 2012, the ERC also developed and produced a new addition to its training curriculum, focused on diversity and cultural sensitivity training in the workplace. The training is designed to raise awareness of culture and workplace diversity, and improving employees' self-awareness and perceptions of other cultural outlooks.



"The ERC has helped Panera Bread enhance the welcoming nature of our cafes across the nation. Their expert staff has provided practical, feasible recommendations to help ensure that all of our cafes are as inviting and accessible as possible to our diverse customer base."

Robert Crumpton
Panera Bread



The ERC Disability Rights Program

The driving force behind the ERC's Disability Rights Program (DRP) is its passion for guaranteeing that people with any type of disability have equal access to all aspects of life. From medical and government offices, to restaurants, transportation, and housing, the ERC ensures that buildings and services are accessible to all individuals. Despite federal, state and local civil rights laws that protect people with disabilities from discrimination, members of the community continue to encounter barriers in a variety of everyday settings. In 2012, the ERC continued its cutting edge, comprehensive approach to eliminating these barriers through education and outreach, testing, partnerships, and advocacy.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

In 2012, the DRP conducted dozens of presentations and informational sessions through local independent living centers, senior service organizations, and national nonprofit organizations. Through this outreach, the DRP is able to provide expertise on protections under the civil rights laws, and gain insight from a wide range of individuals regarding the barriers they face every day.



Assistance Animal User's Public Accommodations and Fair Housing Toolkit

One of the most common questions from both people with disabilities, and the business community is how the law defines "assistance animals," and how they are protected under the law. From guide dogs that help blind individuals navigate their surroundings, to cats that provide emotional

support to people suffering from depression, there are numerous types of assistance animals available to people with disabilities. However, federal laws governing the right to be accompanied by these animals in various settings can be unclear. To address this issue, the ERC's 2012 "Assistance Animal User's Public Accommodations and Fair Housing Toolkit" helps clarify the different types of assistance animals under the federal civil rights laws, and advises those who use assistance animals of their rights, and what they can do if they experience discrimination.

INVESTIGATIONS AND REPORTS

Each year, the ERC receives numerous complaints from individuals in the disability community who face discrimination when attempting to secure rental housing. Following up on these complaints, through testing-based reports, the ERC shines a bright light on issues of discrimination.

In 2012, the ERC issued two disability-focused reports:



Disconnected: Housing Discrimination Against the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Many Deaf and hard of hearing individuals rely on a Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) to communicate by telephone. TRS is a vital tool for individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing when seeking rental housing, because many prospective tenants contact housing

providers by telephone to obtain critical threshold information about apartment availability, rental rates, and the application process.

Based on 100 matched pair telephone tests, the ERC

compared the treatment of TRS users with non-TRS users seeking to rent an apartment. The report, *Disconnected: Housing Discrimination Against the Deaf and Hard of Hearing*, found that TRS users experienced different and more adverse treatment in a disturbing 45 percent of test cases, including outright refusals of service, quoting higher rents to TRS users, not providing available rental incentives, and imposing more stringent application requirements. The DRP continues to collaborate with the Deaf community to address these issues.



Misguided: Housing Discrimination Against Individuals Using Guide Dogs

Refusing to allow an assistive animal, including a guide dog, to live in rental housing, or requiring an additional fee or deposit, effectively denies people with disabilities access to housing. Federal, state, and local laws uniformly require housing

providers to accept recognized assistive animals, even where pets are otherwise not allowed. Despite legal protections, individuals who use assistive animals, including guide dogs, are frequently refused the required accommodations.



The ERC’s 2012, testing-based report, Misguided: Housing Discrimination Against Individuals Using Guide Dogs, done in collaboration with the American Council of the Blind, documented discrimination in the rental housing market against blind or visually-impaired individuals using guide dogs. Based on 100 tests in which a blind tester contacted a housing provider to request information about housing, the ERC documented that illegal barriers to housing in 31 percent of these inquiries, including: outright refusals to allow a guide dog in an apartment, refusals to waive pet fees for a guide dog, and improperly requiring “certification” or other documentation for the guide dog.

PARTNERSHIPS, ADVOCACY,
AND ENFORCEMENT

Transportation

In March 2012, the ERC and other disability rights advocacy organizations succeeded in halting and reforming the District of Columbia’s Red Top Meter Program. The Red Top Meter Program was initiated by the D.C. Department of Transportation (DDOT) to decrease the use of fraudulent “handicapped parking placards,” while maintaining accessible parking for people with disabilities. Unfortunately, the result was to actually decrease access to parking for District residents and visitors with disabilities.

Through effective advocacy, the DRP and other disability advocates successfully convinced the D.C. Council to halt implementation of the Red Top Meter Program as originally planned. On March 29, the ERC submitted testimony and participated in a public oversight roundtable to discuss the Red Top Meter Program. Discussions with DDOT continue with a goal of increasing the number of red top metered spaces that are equitably distributed throughout the city, and establishing protocols for ensuring parking spaces and meters that are fully accessible.

Corporate Partners in Accessibility: Serving Customers with Disabilities

By making goods, services, and facilities equally available to everyone, the business sector plays a vital role in preventing and ending discrimination. Civil rights compliance is a sound business strategy and ensuring businesses are accessible to the 57 million Americans with disabilities—a significant consumer segment. In 2012, the ERC entered into new collaborations with international sandwich retail chain Pret A Manger, and four McDonald’s franchisees, while continuing its relationship with Panera Bread Company. Over the last year the ERC has collaborated with these leaders in the industry to make their locations more welcoming to all. Projects have included developing of comprehensive policies and procedures to ensure equal access, training partners’ staffs to implement these policies and procedures, and advising on architectural barriers in existing and future locations.

U.S. Access Board Advisory Committee Appointment

People with disabilities face a variety of accessibility barriers when trying to access health care services, one of which is the inaccessibility of medical equipment. In 2012, the United States Access Board named the ERC to the Medical Diagnostic Equipment Accessibility Advisory Committee, where the DRP has assisted the Access Board in designing accessibility standards for medical equipment. These standards will provide medical service providers and advocates with essential guidance to ensure the structural accessibility of health care equipment. The Access Board established the Committee to represent the variety of interests affected by promulgation of the proposed standards, and draws on the expertise of business

leaders, architects, and advocates promoting accessibility.

“There are warriors out there like the Equal Rights Center and they help you and they teach you your rights.”

Donna
ERC Member





The ERC Immigrant Rights Program

The U.S. was founded by immigrants and, since its founding, immigrants have played an integral role in the development of the country. Yet despite this rich history, discrimination against and harassment of individuals based on their national origin persists. In recent years, many states and local jurisdictions have adopted increasingly harsh anti-immigrant legislation. While purporting to target “undocumented” immigrants, the anti-immigrant fervor underlying these efforts makes life more difficult for all immigrants and perceived immigrants, irrespective of their legal status. As a result, a broad group of individuals across the country endure discrimination every day based on their national origin, race, ethnicity, or language.

In an effort to address this discrimination, the ERC’s Immigrant Rights Program (IRP) focuses on outreach to a wide variety of immigrant communities and develops efficient and effective means to bridge gaps among groups. By identifying and advancing civil rights for immigrant communities – in housing, employment, public accommodations, government services – the ERC has become a trusted voice for immigrants and their families.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Recognizing that “English only” rules, and similar barriers for people with limited and non-English proficiency

(LEP/NEP) often serve as proxies for national origin discrimination – and that LEP/NEP immigrants may be unaware of their rights and how to seek redress when they experience discrimination – in 2012, the ERC gave special attention to LEP/NEP communities.

Throughout 2012, the ERC led dozens of educational “Know Your Rights” workshops, presentations and trainings in a variety of languages to immigrant communities. Through these events, the IRP staff connected with thousands of individuals and distributed approximately 45,000 ERC outreach materials such as informational brochures, “I Speak _____” cards, self-advocacy toolkits, reports, and newsletters. Through this proactive educational outreach, the ERC has informed individuals about their civil rights, resources available to them, and how to advocate for themselves when faced with unfair treatment.

Outreach to Immigrant Youth

In 2012, collaborating with Liberty’s Promise, an organization that supports young immigrants in need while encouraging them to be active and conscientious American citizens, the IRP met with nine groups of high school students across Maryland and Virginia, providing “Know Your Rights” presentations on housing discrimination and civil rights protections. Presentations were conducted at the Silver Spring Civic Center, Wheaton High School, Gaithersburg High School, High Point High School, West

Potomac High School, and T.C. Williams High School.

Immigrant Rights PSA

Funded by a HUD grant, in July, the ERC produced a series of public service announcements as a part of a campaign to highlight the services provided by the IRP. The ERC collaborated with Washington, D.C. metropolitan area radio stations WMAL, WLZL, WTOP, WILC, and El Zol to air 30 second spots in both English and Spanish. The announcements informed listeners that discrimination based on ethnicity is against the law, and identified the ERC as a resource to help those who may have experienced discrimination. These informative announcements, many of them during peak listening hours, reached millions of listeners in the District, Maryland, and Virginia.

Collaboration with the Southern Poverty Law Center

In September, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) filed complaints with the U.S. Department of Justice and with the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights against the Jefferson Parish (LA) Public School System alleging discrimination against Spanish-speaking parents as they attempted to enroll their children in the school system. Under federal law, school districts that receive federal funding are required to provide students and parents with important information in a language they understand. Underlying SPLC’s complaints

was an innovative language access testing initiative provided by the ERC.

Using a combination of email, mail, telephone and in-person testing, the ERC documented that 70.3 percent of Jefferson Parish Public School sites did not offer any Spanish-language assistance over the phone, 49.2 percent of sites either disconnected the call or a school employee hung up on the tester attempting to communicate in Spanish. ERC testing also found that 75 percent of Spanish-language emails sent to the schools did not receive a response, and 53.6 percent of testers visiting the sites in person were not provided any Spanish-language assistance after requesting and waiting for assistance.

National Council of La Raza Annual Conference

For the second year, the ERC was invited to present at the National Council of La Raza’s (NCLR) 2012 national annual conference. The ERC, in partnership with NCLR and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), provided a pre-conference workshop for local immigrant rights and housing advocates in Nevada to develop their knowledge about fair housing and discrimination based on national origin. This year’s presentation included a variety of fair housing issues, including access and services for people with limited English proficiency, source of income discrimination in

Las Vegas' unique economy, and the barriers to housing faced by undocumented persons.

National Origin and Religion Self-Advocacy Toolkit
In order to assist those who might face discrimination because of their membership in multiple vulnerable groups, in 2012, the ERC published a "National Origin and Religion Self-Advocacy Toolkit," focusing on the intersections of national origin, race, and religion in housing discrimination. Supported by a HUD grant, the toolkit is designed to assist people who may experience discrimination based on religion, race, and their actual or presumed national origin, and provides guidance for asserting their rights under the Fair Housing Act.

**LANGUAGE
ACCESS TESTING**

In 2012, the ERC collaborated with the D.C. Office of Human Rights (DCOHR) to help assess levels of compliance by D.C. government agencies with the D.C. Language Access Act. The Language Access Act, one of the most progressive laws of its type in the country, requires D.C. agencies to provide information and services in the six languages that are most commonly spoken in the nation's capital. DCOHR is charged with monitoring compliance with the Language Access Act, and it chose to collaborate with the ERC to assess agencies' responses to individuals who speak one of the protected languages. The ERC conducted over 250 tests on behalf of the District government under this collaboration. The results of that investigation can be found at:
<http://ohr.dc.gov/languageaccess/2012report>

Limited English Proficiency Initiative
In September 2011, the ERC was awarded one of the first Limited English Proficiency Initiative (LEPI) grants ever given by HUD. This \$100,000 grant allowed

the ERC to significantly expand its education and outreach to immigrant community members who speak Spanish, French, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Amharic, and Korean, and better ensure that these communities have equal access to the ERC and HUD programs, services and activities in their primary language.

Under the LEPI grant, the ERC made 14 "Know Your Rights" presentations across the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area to a diverse array of limited and no-English proficiency audiences at local non-profit organizations, English as a Second Language classrooms, career training sites, high schools, and community-based organizations.

The ERC also participated in a number of community service fairs and other events, providing thousands of printed materials, translated into 6 languages, regarding fair housing, immigrant rights, language access, and general information on ERC services. The LEPI grant was completed in November and allowed the ERC to build and strengthen relationships with many immigrant communities in the greater Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.

As a part of the Limited English Proficiency Initiative, in 2012 the ERC also participated in the D.C. Language Access Coalition. Consisting of more than 40 member organizations, the Coalition works to ensure that LEP/NEP individuals who live and work in the District have equal access to essential government benefits and services including food stamps, Medicaid, health care, unemployment benefits, job training programs, public education, housing, fire, police and emergency services, and mental health services.

"The bilingual and expert staff of the ERC was helpful in explaining our rights and eventually helping us find justice... We feel very fortunate to have found the services of the ERC."

Orlando Argueta
ERC Client





Years of Promoting Progress

"The past is prologue, and the future is a challenge we accept with excitement, dedication and promise."

—ERC Retiring Board President and co-founder, Rev. Dr. James G. Macdonell

In 1983, five diverse, interfaith religious leaders came together to help stem the long-present problem of housing discrimination in the greater Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. Working out of a borrowed office, the Fair Housing Council of Greater Washington—which became the ERC—initially focused on local fair housing issues. Times changed, the face of civil rights changed, and so too did the ERC. Today, with 6,000 members and more than 300 civil rights testers, the ERC is making a national impact advancing fair housing, fair employment, as well as disability, immigrant and LGBT rights.

The ERC has much to show for 30 years of civil rights advocacy— more than 60,000 housing units and more than 55,000 bank, retail, restaurant and hotel locations made more accessible for people with disabilities; more than 17,500 apartments made available to Housing Choice Voucher holders; access to public transportation improved for more than 23,000 people using wheelchairs in the D.C. metro area; tens of thousands trained in fair housing rights and responsibilities, and hundreds of thousands offered more equal opportunities through collaborative work with dozens of corporate partners.

On April 25, 2013, the ERC celebrated 30 years of advancing civil rights. The Board of Directors, current and former staff, individual members, federal and local government representatives, advocates, corporate partners and friends all gathered at the Pew Charitable Trusts in downtown Washington, D.C., to honor those who have been a part of, partnered with, and supported the ERC. In recognition of 30 years of work and advocacy, the

Mayor of the District of Columbia, Hon. Vincent Gray, proclaimed April 25, 2013 as "Equal Rights Center Day" in the District.

This event was also a celebration of the invaluable leadership of ERC Board President Rev. Dr. James G. "Jim" Macdonell. On April 25, Jim formally stepped down as Board President. Jim and the other four founders of the ERC blazed a path that allowed the ERC to develop into the dynamic, national organization that it is today.

The ERC's successes are due to the organization's members and partners. They serve as the eyes and ears of the ERC, letting the organization know when and where discrimination is happening, and being part of the proactive efforts to promote equal opportunity. The ERC's 30 Anniversary celebration would not have been possible without the generous sponsorship of more than 20 ERC partner organizations. Led by Trammell Crow Residential, sponsors included a host of law firms, restaurateurs, housing developers, architectural firms, real estate brokers, and graphic design firms.

Despite gains, the ERC knows all too well that much remains to be done. The ERC continues to receive complaints of discrimination from individuals every day, and its testing investigations confirm that equal opportunity for all has not yet been realized. With 30 years of experience and history, the ERC will continue to invest in innovative ways to advance its mission and achieve its vision of a future where equality for all is a reality.

ERC 30th Anniversary Sponsors

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The work of the ERC would not be possible without the support, assistance, and contributions made by others. We are especially thankful to all those who have generously donated time, services, and funds to us in 2012.



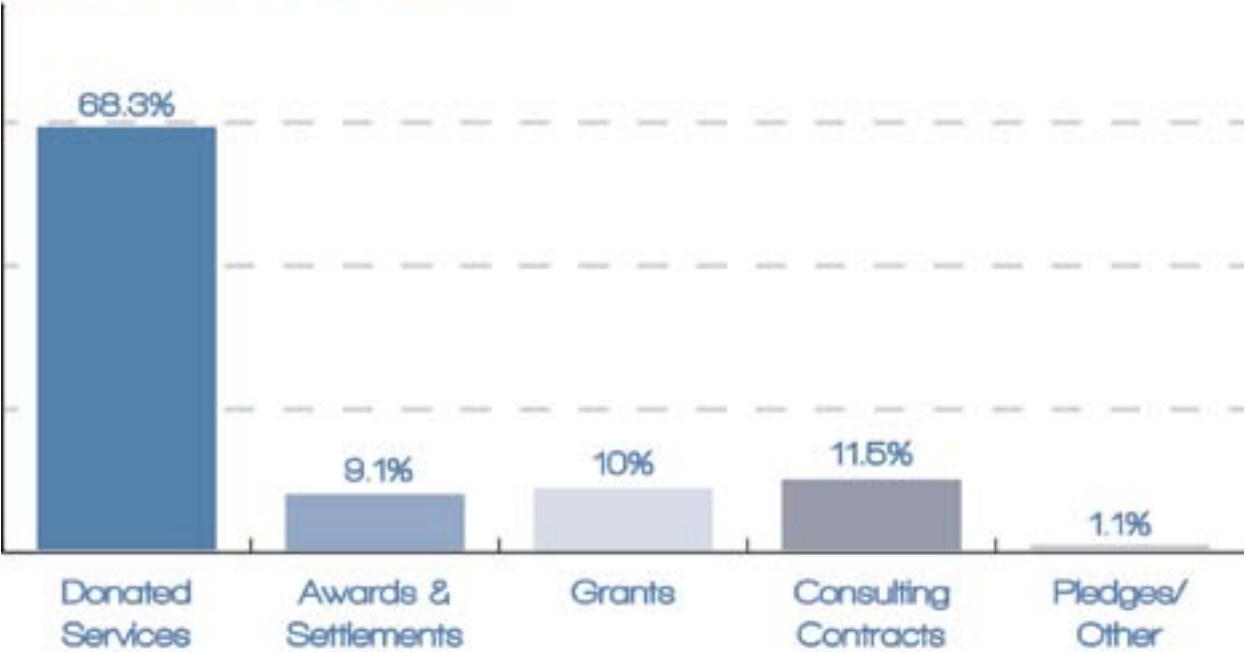
The ERC 2012 Financial Health

As the Equal Rights Center celebrates 30 years of civil rights service, it remains fiscally sound. Throughout 2012, the ERC continued to build and diversify its financial base. Drawing financial support from its ever-expanding individual and corporate membership, private foundation funding, strong governmental support from the United States Department of Housing & Urban Development, and civil rights consulting, the ERC is stronger financially today than at any time in its history.

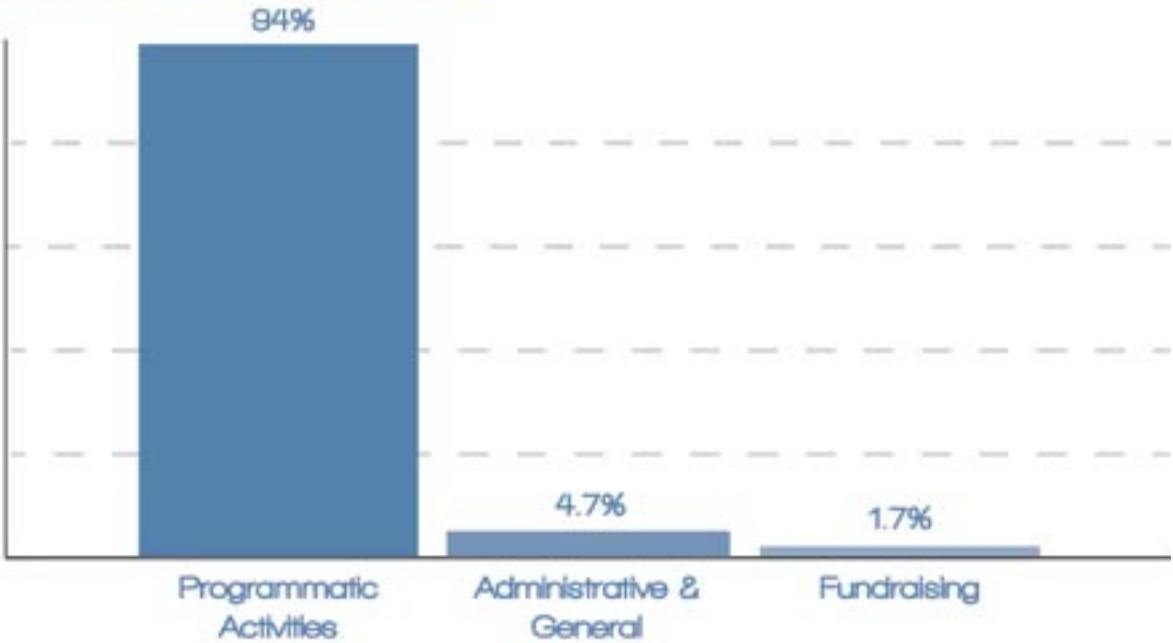
It is through a strong financial foundation that the ERC is able to advocate for civil rights throughout the greater Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, and across the United States. In recognition of the ERC's dedication, accountability, and transparency, the ERC is listed as a member of the National Capital Area United Way and the Combined Federal Campaign of the National Capital Area.

The ERC is a 501(c)3 organization that annually regularly files the requisite Form 990 with the Internal Revenue Service, and conducts an independent financial audit each year. The following charts summarize the ERC's revenues and expenses for the 2012 calendar year, the last period for which audited financial information is available. The information provided reflects the ERC's financial data as of December 31, 2012.

2012 ERC Revenue



2012 ERC Expenses



Consolidated Statement of Financial Position

	2012 Totals	2011 Totals
Assets		
Current assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 30,882	\$ 57,227
Accounts receivable	2,170,932	2,016,953
Prepaid expenses	<u>5,845</u>	<u>5,998</u>
Total current assets	2,207,659	2,080,178
Property and equipment	6,755	13,502
Total assets	\$ 2,214,414	\$ 2,093,680
Liabilities		
Current liabilities		
Accounts payable	\$ 202,163	\$ 157,683
Line of credit	258,571	--
Notes payable	--	59,614
Total current liabilities	460,734	217,297
Long-term liabilities		
Deferred lease liability	37,779	30,442
Total long-term liabilities	37,779	30,442
Total Liabilities	498,513	247,719
Net assets		
Unrestricted (defecit)	(267,031)	(44,733)
Temporarily restricted	<u>1,982,932</u>	<u>1,890,674</u>
Total net assets	\$ 1,715,901	\$ 1,845,941
Total liabilities and net assets	\$2,214,414	\$2,093,680

Consolidated Statement of Activities and Changes in Net Assets

	2012 Totals	2011 Totals
Unrestricted net assets		
Support and revenue		
Contributions- donated services	\$ 3,878,690	\$ 2,484,276
Consulting contracts	650,062	254,486
Awards/settlements	518,202	689,580
Grants-Government	507,195	424,055
Grants-Foundations	64,500	32,000
Contributions and pledges	20,447	17,107
Interest	9	1,221
Net assets released from restrictions	39,242	32,470
Total support and revenue	\$ 5,678,347	\$ 3,935,195
Expenses		
Program Services	5,517,743	3,797,826
Total program services	5,517,743	3,797,826
Supporting Services		
General and administrative	280,156	259,985
Fundraising	102,746	114,846
Total supporting services	382,902	374,831
Total expenses	\$ 5,900,645	\$ 4,172,657
Change in unrestricted net assets	(222,298)	(237,462)
Temporary restricted net assets		
Awards/Settlements	101,500	238,500
Grants-Foundations	30,000	--
Net assets released from restrictions	(39,242)	(32,470)
Change in temporary restricted net assets	92,258	206,030
Change in net assets	(130,040)	(31,432)
Net assets, beginning of year	\$1,845,941	\$1,877,373
Net assets, end of year	\$1,715,901	\$1,845,941



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