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Congress of the United States

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Dear Friend:

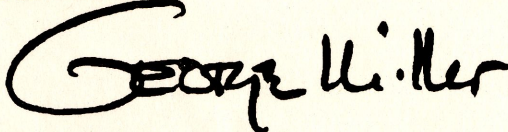
Twenty years ago, the U.S. government made a commitment to ending discrimination in our nation's housing laws. Recent passage of landmark legislation makes good on that promise by providing tougher enforcement of the laws to prohibit discrimination in the sale or rental of any public or private dwelling.

The Fair Housing Act Amendments, H.R. 1158, supported by a broad coalition of civil rights groups and realtors and overwhelmingly approved by Congress, builds on the original 1968 law which bars discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin. The measure empowers the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to take discrimination cases as far as the Federal courts. Previously, HUD only had the authority to investigate complaints and to try to reconcile the parties. This bill, however, allows HUD to initiate lawsuits, seek injunctions to halt possible discrimination, and provides for the assessment of tough civil penalties for violators. The bill also, for the first time, prohibits discrimination against the mentally and physically disabled, as well as families with children.

Since passage of the original Fair Housing Act, discrimination and segregation in housing continues to be pervasive. Last year, HUD received almost 5,000 complaints charging discrimination. Forty-eight percent of black families seeking to buy homes faced discrimination. In addition, 72 percent of black families seeking to rent dwellings also encountered racial discrimination.

Most experts have concluded that the key reason the Fair Housing Act has not done a better job in preventing housing discrimination is that it lacked an effective enforcement mechanism. Passage of this bill will do much to address this problem.

Sincerely,



GEORGE MILLER
Member of Congress, 7th District

