

*Source: WCAX.com, April 8, 2010*

## **Housing Horrors, Part 2**

*St. Albans, Vermont - April 8, 2010*

Native Texan Alexia Wilson moved to Vermont last month with her 19-month-old grandson. She rented an apartment-- sight unseen. After being in the apartment for about a month, the landlord sent her a letter to vacate claiming her child was too loud, after neighbors complained about the noise coming from her apartment.

"She rented to me knowing that I had a child. Now she's wanting to kick me out because I have a child," Wilson said.

WCAX News contacted the landlord, Rose Jackson, who resides in Florida.

Reporter Melinda Davenport: She feels like she's been discriminated against. Is that true?

Rose Jackson: Oh! That's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard. Absolutely not! I don't want to go into this right now, OK?

"While it is absolutely true that you can be evicted in this state for the disturbance of neighbors, that really does more speak to noise that's not the normal activity of daily life noises," explained Pam Favreau, a tenant advocate.

According to the Vermont Fair Housing Act, it is illegal to discriminate for variety of reasons, including on the presence of minor children. Unlawful discrimination can take the form of a landlord refusing to rent or show an apartment and applying different terms or conditions to the agreement.

Stuart Bennett from the Vermont Apartment Owners Association says that while discrimination is tough to prove-- and there *are* gray areas in this case-- there are also substantial consequences for those in violation of Vermont fair housing laws.

"In this particular case, is sending notice saying you have got to leave because the child is making noise, without having attempts to make a reasonable accommodation to this, they've got a problem," Bennett said. "And they'll lose."

Those being disturbed by noise also have options.

"The other neighbor would have a pretty good argument that they're not getting what they bargained for, which is peace and quiet. And they'd have the right to break the lease and leave," Bennett said.

Wilson says she will fight the eviction notice, as she wants to stay in her current rental unit for the full year that was agreed upon.

"I should be able to go home from work, or home from whatever I was doing out, and live my life," Wilson said. "That's my place to live, for a year."

If you feel you have been discriminated against while searching for rental housing, you do have options:

[Contact the Vermont Human Rights Commission: They enforce a number of anti-discrimination laws including the Fair Housing and Public Accommodations Act.](#)

[If you need legal advice due to discrimination, you can contact Vermont Legal Aid. They defend the civil rights of victims of housing discrimination free of charge.](#)

And finally, check out the [Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity Fair Housing Handbook](#) or [Handbook for Landlords](#) which outlines the law to protect both parties.

[Melinda Davenport](#) - WCAX News

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