



Facebook Pulls Ads On HUD Complaint

Following HUD's accusation that social media giant Facebook enables housing discrimination, Facebook officials began cutting thousands of ads allowing landlords and homeowners to discriminate against prospective renters and buyers.

HUD accused Facebook of using its advertising platform to enable property owners to discriminate against prospective renters and homebuyers based on their race, color, religion, sex, familial status, national origin, disability, or other factors.

HUD's move against Facebook is part of the department's decision to become aggressive in its fair housing enforcement following accusations that it had largely relinquished the responsibility under Secretary Ben Carson.

Anna Maria Farias is the face behind the new offensive (*see related story this issue*) to rein in Fair Housing Act violators. Following confirmation of her nomination as assistant secretary for Fair Housing & Equal Opportunity, Farias gave the impression of scaling back fair housing enforcement in what ostensibly was a Trump administration scheme to largely ignore enforcement.

Instead, Farias initially pulled back on enforcement to regroup the office and target the most egregious violators first, Facebook among them. One of the first moves by Farias was to freeze enforcement of about six investigations ordered by Carson's predecessor, Julian Castro, under what is known as "secretary-initiated" cases, i.e., those intended to set a social example rather than simply penalize violators.

Carson, instead, opted to work with communities first before taking fair housing enforcement action if a community resists or reneges on HUD's overtures. The department is still pursuing individual violators.

HUD's action against Facebook, which was on Castro's list for enforcement, was set aside by Farias until she could reorganize the office and set new enforcement goals. Critics interpreted that move as HUD's abdication of fair housing enforcement.

HUD's complaint against Facebook includes allowing advertisers to:

- Display housing ads exclusive to either men or women;
- Not show ads to users Facebook categorizes as interested in "child care" or "parenting," or show ads only to users with children above a specified age;
- Not show ads to Facebook users interested in an "assistance dog," "mobility scooter," "accessibility" or "deaf culture";
- To display/not display ads to users Facebook categorized as interested in a particular place of worship, religion, or tenet, such as the "Christian Church," "Sikhism," "Hinduism." or the "Bible;"
- Not show ads to users Facebook categorizes as interested in "Latin America," "Canada," "Southeast Asia," "China," "Honduras," or "Somalia;"
- Draw a line around zip codes and then not display ads to Facebook users who live in specified zip codes.

HUD says Facebook additionally promotes its advertising targeting platform for housing purposes with "success stories" for finding the "perfect homeowners," "reaching homebuyers," "attracting renters" and "personalizing property ads."

HUD's complaint triggers a fact-finding investigation. In the interim, Facebook tells HUD there is no place for discrimination on its platform, and it plans to both respond in court and continue working with HUD to resolve concerns.

Info: Go to www.hud.gov for additional information.

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