

# Niles Township Human Relations Council

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Dear Member:

Attached is a copy of a statement delivered to the State Senate Committee on Registration and Miscellany by Mr. Donald Perille, Co-Chairman of the Skokie Human Relations Commission.

In it you will find a summation of the Commission's attitudes toward the Skokie Plan, the effectiveness of so-called voluntary plans, and the need for legislation on Open Occupancy.

I know you will find this excellent statement of position of interest and value. I hope that you who are delegates from member organizations will report this statement back to your organizations.

During the coming weeks, the State Legislature will be considering open occupancy legislation. Your voice can add necessary support. Write to Senator Arrington and to your State Representative in support of House Bill 155, the Partee Bill.

Sincerely,

Lawrence M. Martin,  
Chairman

STATEMENT MADE BY DONALD P. PERILLE, CO-CHAIRMAN, SKOKIE HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION  
BEFORE THE ILLINOIS SENATE COMMITTEE ON REGISTRATION & MISCELLANY - April 11, 1967

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It is both a pleasure and a privilege to be appearing before this committee today. I am here as Co-chairman of the Skokie Human Relations Commission and speak for that body today. The Commission is an official arm of Skokie Village government, established by ordinance, as opposed to voluntary councils or committees. This does not necessarily make us better...only more official.

We are here to discuss Senate Bill 155. However, in judging the merits of this bill, you gentlemen must weigh the merits of similar bills now in the legislative hopper. Concerned as to how consideration of other bills might affect your thinking on Senate Bill 155, I believe it is pertinent for the Skokie Human Relations Commission to comment on one particularly prominent bill.

It has been alleged that House Bill 675, which allows a homeowner to discriminate in the sale of his home by so instructing his realtor, is patterned after the Skokie Plan for voluntary fair housing. In view of this the Commission must make two points crystal clear.

(1) The Skokie Plan, in extending this feature to the homeowner, simply recognized a legal right that existed, or at least was not specifically prohibited by any state or national law or court decision. We oppose this feature as a part of state law as it legitimatizes an act of discrimination which we believe to be morally wrong and contrary to the best interests of all citizens of this state.

(2) We take serious exception to the extravagant claims we understand are being circulated in Springfield as to the success of our plan. Such claims could not originate from anyone in Skokie who is knowledgeable.

I would like to be able to report that the Skokie Plan has been unequivocally successful, but I cannot. We believe that it has had great value in making fair housing official village policy and as the basis for education in the continuing discussion on the need for fair housing generated by the publication and mailing to every homeowner in Skokie, this booklet, "Your Home And Skokie's Future." But to say that our plan has opened up our village or that we have fair housing is simply not true.

Having completed the first year of our experiment in voluntary fair housing, we would recommend the educational phase of the plan to all Illinois communities. Our records indicate an unmistakable trend in Skokie homeowner attitudes toward selling on an open basis or at least away from selling on a discriminatory basis. Regrettably, during this same period of changing homeowner attitudes, not one home in Skokie was sold to a Negro by a Realtor.

In view of this experience, the Commission believes that while voluntary plans have educational value, they cannot, by themselves, bring about open housing. They require the support of law, on as wide a geographical basis as possible. The Skokie Human Relations Commission, by unanimous vote, recommends enactment of a comprehensive state fair housing law with enforcement provisions. We feel that Senate Bill 155 contains the features such a law should embody.

I think it important to point out that the Commission is representative of our village. Several members are Republicans, long active in local community affairs. Three of those are precinct captains, two of which, including myself, were area chairmen for Senator Goldwater in 1964. A few of the fifteen members might be portrayed as active integrationists, but all of us are practical men who recognize the need for change.

Many of us have opposed fair housing laws in the belief that the individual should have the right to dispose of his property as he saw fit, within the confines of public health, safety and welfare. But we realize now that the real abridgement of this right is not in the law itself but in the absence of law. We do not find that it is the seller who fears fair housing legislation. It is the one who is staying that fears it. In the absence of law, he joins with others, including many real estate brokers, to coerce the seller to do his bidding. A viable, workable law will eliminate this abuse of freedom and permit both buyer and seller to exercise their God-given right to acquire, hold or sell real property in a fully free manner.