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Former First Selectman Evonne Klein Receives Award for Promoting Access to Housing

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Former Darien selectwoman and current state Housing Commissioner Evonne Klein has received an award in part for "her efforts to expand access to affordable housing through legislative action that would discourage exclusionary zoning practices," the state Department of Housing announced.

Another reason she received the Edward M. Kennedy Legislative Advocacy Award from the Connecticut Fair Housing Center was for her efforts to "eliminate archaic and undefined terminology in the state's zoning statutes," the announcement said.

"Breaking down the barriers to opportunity means acknowledging that the pockets of segregation in our society did not happen by chance," Klein said. "They were formed as a result of carefully crafted government policies in the early 1900s."

"Exclusionary zoning, redlining, and housing discrimination are now illegal thanks to the federal Fair Housing Act of 1968," she continued. "However, the effect of their long term existence is a challenge we still face. We need organizations like the Connecticut Fair Housing Center to work on the front lines, battling discriminatory housing practices and segregation each and every day."

As co-chair of the state's Fair Housing Working Group, Klein oversaw the introduction of five legislative proposals that would promote inclusivity and fairness — making Connecticut a better place to live, work, and raise a family.

Each year, the center selects recipients who have made significant strides to bring fair housing issues to the forefront of the legislative process. Along with Klein, the other co-chair of the Fair Housing Working Group State Rep. Roland Lemar, a New Haven Democrat, also received the award.

"Though the legislature did not enact the Fair Housing Working Group's recommendations this session, we started the tough conversations and a growing number of legislators have shown they are committed to making appropriate changes so we can dismantle the barriers to opportunity that still exist for so many," Klein said.

Klein lives in Darien with her husband, Randy.

About the Connecticut Fair Housing Center

The mission of the [Connecticut Fair Housing Center](#) is to ensure that all people have equal access to housing opportunities in Connecticut. Because housing discrimination disproportionately affects people with low incomes, the Center focuses on the intersection of poverty and housing discrimination.

The Center also assists Connecticut homeowners who have been hit hardest by the nation's ongoing foreclosure crisis. Since 1994, the Connecticut Fair Housing Center has provided free investigative and legal services to residents who believe they have been the victims of housing discrimination.

The Center also has provided education and conducted outreach on fair housing and fair lending issues throughout Connecticut. In addition, the Center has worked with the state, cities, towns, housing developers, housing managers, and others to promote compliance with federal fair housing laws.