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## Firearms in public housing subject of lawsuit

BY KURT ERICKSON, The Southern Springfield Bureau Apr 5, 2012

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SPRINGFIELD – A former police officer who lives in public housing is suing his government landlord over a policy barring residents from having guns on the premises.

In a case that could have ramifications for housing authorities with similar bans, Ronald C. Winbigler said he will be kicked out of his apartment in Monmouth in mid-April unless he verifies he does not have a gun.

The case, filed at the federal courthouse in Rock Island, is being brought by attorneys financed by the Bellevue, Wash.-based Second Amendment Foundation, who previously sought to end Illinois' ban on carrying loaded weapons in public.

“Ron Winbigler faces the same dilemma so many other residents of government-subsidized public housing face,” said foundation Executive Vice President Alan Gottlieb. “He wants a firearm for self-defense, but he risks losing a place to live because of bureaucratic political correctness. As a police officer, he consistently trained and repeatedly qualified in the safe use and handling of firearms, and because of his experience, he understands the threat of crime.”

The suit says Winbigler, a Monmouth police officer in the 1970s, is physically disabled and in need of governmental assistance in the form of subsidized housing from the Warren County Housing Authority.

“People do not lose their Second Amendment rights just because they are of limited means,” added attorney David Sigale, who is representing Winbigler. “Nobody wishes to be in need of financial assistance, but it is an indignity to make the waiver of constitutional rights a condition of government-subsidized housing.”

Although similar cases have been brought about other housing agencies, Winbigler attorney David Sigale said he was unaware of any in Illinois.

Warren County Housing Authority executive director Teresa Greenstreet could not immediately be reached for comment.

Debbie Smith, director of the Illinois Association of Housing Authorities, was unsure of how many agencies have similar firearms bans in the state.

“Each housing authority has its own policies,” Smith said.

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