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Noted law professor seeks to bar CUA from ending co-ed residences

Jerry Filteau | Jul. 25, 2011 NCR Today

WASHINGTON -- A George Washington University law professor noted for his groundbreaking legal campaigns against smoking and obesity has declared war on The Catholic University of America's recent decision to change its co-ed residences on campus to single-sex housing.

The professor, John H. Banzhaf III, has filed a complaint with the District of Columbia Human Rights Office claiming that CUA President John Garvey violated the DC Human Rights Act's prohibitions against sex discrimination when he decided to place all incoming freshmen who live on campus in single-sex residences this fall. Over the next three years the rest of the current co-ed residences are to be converted as well, as new incoming classes follow the same pattern.

In an interview with *NCR* this spring [1], Garvey noted that sociological studies show what he had learned anecdotally from his own grown children -- that students living in co-ed dorms are far more likely to drink alcohol weekly, binge drink, engage in sexual behavior with students of the opposite sex, be involved in illegal behavior and suffer academically.

Garvey also wrote about the university's decision in an op-ed piece in *The Wall Street Journal*.

In response to media questions about Banzhaf's complaint, CUA spokesman Victor Nakas said, "The university remains confident that the law does not require that men and women be housed together in residence halls. It is moving ahead with its plans to house the incoming class of freshmen in single-sex residence halls when they arrive on campus" in August.

In the 1960s Banzhaf founded ASH -- Action on Smoking and Health -- and led the successful fight for a Federal Communications Commission ruling that radio and TV stations which carried tobacco advertising would also have to carry public service advertising against smoking. As a result tobacco companies in 1970 dropped all broadcast advertising.

He has also led successful battles against smoking in public places and more recently has fought childhood obesity through campaigns against soft drinks in schools and for fast-food chains to serve more healthy food.

[Jerry Filteau is *NCR* Washington correspondent.]

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