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## **City of Oakland Awarded \$56,610 by Superior Court for 'Vexatious' Landlord's Failure to Comply**

(Oakland, CA) – Alameda County Superior Court awarded the City of Oakland \$56,610 for sanctions against landlord and “vexatious litigant,” Richard Thomas, for his two years of non-compliance with an agreement to monitor his rental activities by the City Attorney’s office.

Richard Thomas of Environment and Land Management, Inc. is the owner of forty-four rental properties throughout the Bay Area. In 2002, the Office of the City Attorney filed a complaint against Thomas for failing to inform tenants of their rental rights and evicting tenants in order to raise rents, direct violations of Oakland rent laws. He entered into a Stipulated Settlement Agreement for three years with the City Attorney’s office. Under the agreement, Thomas agreed to pay fees and have his rental activities monitored to ensure compliance with Oakland rent laws. Despite the City Attorney’s efforts over the past two years, Thomas failed to comply. In July of this year, the Court issued \$15,590 in sanctions which are currently under appeal.

Thomas has been the focus of tenant’s rights organizations for allegedly scamming tenants out of security deposits and countersuing the former tenants when they take him to small claims court to recoup their security deposits. His history of suing his own lawyers earned him the title of ‘vexatious litigant’ by Alameda County Judge Leo Dorado. He lost a lawsuit against a lawyer he attempted to sue for malpractice and paid \$900,000 plus \$650,000 in punitive damages. Thomas appealed but the award was upheld by the State Court of Appeals.