

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

December 2, 2004

CONTACT:

John A. Pickens (Montgomery)
Alabama Appleseed Center for Law & Justice, Inc.
334/263-0086 or alaappleseed@bellsouth.net
Ken Goldman (Washington, DC)
The Appleseed Foundation
202/347-7960 or kgoldman@appleseeds.net

ALABAMA APPLESEED RELEASES 50-STATE LANDLORD/TENANT LAW SURVEY SHOWING ALABAMA LAGGING BEHIND NATIONAL TREND MODERNIZING RESIDENTIAL LANDLORD/TENANT LAWS

Montgomery – The Alabama Appleseed Center for Law & Justice released today a survey of residential landlord/tenant laws that compares and contrasts the laws in all 50 states that affect residential landlords and tenants. This survey report shows that Alabama is lagging behind a national trend whereby states have modernized their laws relating to residential leases in order to set out specifically by statute the rights and obligations of both landlords and tenants in residential rental agreements. Alabama does not have a modern, comprehensive residential landlord/tenant law. Even though several landlord/tenant bills have been introduced in the state legislature during the last five years, opposing interests representing landlords and tenants have not been able to reach an acceptable compromise. As a result, Alabama's landlords and tenants are shackled with outdated landlord/tenant laws that speak in terms of crop confiscation and liens for crop preparation loans - reflecting Alabama's agrarian past rather than today's urban environment with large residential apartment complexes.

“It is time for Alabama to have a modern, up-to-date residential landlord/tenant law that reflects the realities of present-day life in Alabama” said John Pickens, executive director of the Alabama Appleseed Center. “The 50-state survey we are releasing today relates to the major unresolved issues. This survey also shows that practically every state, except Alabama, has been able to overcome the competing interests of landlords and tenants, and they have been able to give their states reasonable, practical and balanced laws which both landlords and tenants can accept. It is our hope that this survey report will be helpful to representatives of Alabama's landlords and tenants and to Alabama legislators as they look in the next legislative session to fashioning and passing a new residential landlord/tenant law. ”

“The legislative stalemate over a residential landlord/tenant law is hurting the state both economically and conceptually” said Alabama Appleseed's board chairman, Nick Gaede, a senior partner with the Birmingham law firm of Bradley, Arant, Rose and White. “As Alabama continues to bring new industry into the state and continues to intensify its economic development efforts, it is imperative that our underlying laws relating to rental housing be modernized to meet the realities of urban life. Passage of a comprehensive residential landlord/tenant law would also continue to enhance the image of Alabama as a good state in which to do business and to live. We believe the 50-state survey we are releasing today contains examples of how other states have dealt constructively with the key issues related to residential leases that have heretofore divided us in Alabama. We are optimistic that a new residential landlord/tenant law can and will be developed and passed in the upcoming legislative session in 2005, and Alabama Appleseed is committed to helping make that a reality.”

Founded in 1999, Alabama Appleseed is a nonprofit and nonpartisan organization that identifies significant needs in the state, tackles their root causes, and crafts practical, lasting solutions through legal advocacy, community involvement, and policy expertise.