

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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An invasion of privacy suit was filed today in Broward Circuit Court against an Internal Revenue Service agent who had installed a hidden video camera to spy on his tenant, a twenty-three-year-old BCC student. According to the Complaint and a Davie Police report, Kenneth W. Ryals, 57, installed a mini wireless transmitting camera in a DVD player in his tenant's bedroom. The police report stated that Ryals "admitted to placing the video camera in [the] victim's room and watching her for his own personal pleasure."

The plaintiff in the civil action hopes that her suit will appeal to Ryals' conscience and encourage him to stop preying on young women like herself. The plaintiff is especially concerned because even after Ryals' arrest, she saw that the room she rented, with a photograph of Ryals' townhouse, was advertised again on Roommates.com.

The civil suit alleges that Ryals lured the plaintiff into renting a room in his personal residence by promising low rent, introducing her to another female tenant who would continue living at the townhome, and allowing her to install her own lock on the door to her room. Ryals also told the tenant that he could rent only to women because he had a seven-year-old daughter who visited every other week.

The suit seeks unspecified damages for invasion of her client's privacy and intentional infliction of emotional distress, among other causes of action. In a hidden camera lawsuit filed last year in Tennessee, a married couple sued their landlord for \$3 million. Similar incidents have been recounted throughout the country, including from the college town of Ithaca, New York, where a landlord was indicted on ten counts of surreptitiously viewing and videotaping his female tenants' dressing or undressing. Privacy attorney Patricia Wallace of Walter J. Mathews,

P.A., said that “these men take advantage of young women who have little income and a lot of faith in their fellow human beings.”

Wallace, who is the plaintiff’s attorney in the action against Ryals, explained that the suit was necessary because “under Florida law, video voyeurism – even a landlord’s surreptitiously viewing his tenant while she is in her bedroom – is only a misdemeanor. We felt a need to take on this suit in order to stop people like Mr. Ryals from engaging in this kind of conduct and to let other tenants know what their landlords may be doing.” Wallace further explained that detection of some video cameras is extremely difficult and in some cases nearly impossible without the aid of a camera-detecting device. “Renters need to be aware of this growing phenomenon and take steps to protect themselves,” Wallace said. “Imagine how you would feel to know that your middle-aged landlord sat around watching you while you got undressed, or while you were in bed. To this day, I doubt whether our client can dress anywhere outside of her closet after having been subjected to this kind of personal invasion.”

Ryals was arrested on September 15, 2007, and he has pled “not guilty” to charges of video voyeurism. The criminal action is pending in Broward County Court, Case Number 07-023745MM10A. David J. Bogenschutz is representing Ryals in the criminal matter.

A copy of the civil complaint is attached.

Patricia Wallace can be reached at Walter J. Mathews, P.A., Courthouse Law Plaza, Suite 300, 700 S.E. Third Avenue, Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33316; telephone 954-463-1929; e-mail pwallace@wjmlawfirm.com.