

NAR's 2012 Political Advocacy Accomplishments Mean Business for REALTORS®

The National Association of REALTORS® (NAR) actively protects the interests of its more than one million members daily as it advocates for federal policy and state and local regulatory initiatives. During the 112th Congress, the REALTOR® legislative and regulatory agenda focused on efforts to stimulate, stabilize and strengthen real estate markets across the nation while protecting the business interests of members. A fundamentally sound and dynamic U.S. real estate market is vital to the American economy and fosters vibrant communities in which to live and work.

Here are the highlights of NAR's 2012 federal legislative and regulatory accomplishments:

Congress Reauthorized National Flood Insurance Program for Five Years

Achieving one of NAR's top priorities for the year, the Senate and House passed the Flood Insurance Reform Act. Passage of the five-year reauthorization will bring certainty to real estate transactions in more than 21,000 communities nationwide where flood insurance is required for a mortgage. The bill ensures the program will continue long term for more than 5.6 million business- and homeowners who rely on it, and means taxpayers will spend less on federal assistance for flood disasters over the long run. This was the culmination of a successful multi-year campaign and a final push at NAR's Midyear Legislative Meetings & Trade Expo in May 2012.

VA Loan Limits Reinstated, VA ARM Made Permanent

President Obama signed into law the "Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012," which reinstates the higher Veterans Affairs (VA) loan limits and makes the VA Adjustable Rate Mortgage (ARM) programs permanent. This bill restores the higher loan limits for VA-guaranteed loans through 2014. NAR joined in a coalition letter sent to the leadership of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the House Leadership urging Congress to pass this bill.

Short Sales

NAR worked closely with the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA) on improving the short sale process, which includes changes such as increased hardship eligibility, a fix to the arm's-length affidavit our members have had problems with, alignment of deficiency waiver policies, and improvements to property valuation "guidance." FHFA also responded to the concerns of REALTORS® and consumers regarding the ongoing delays in the approval process and the negative impact that slow response times are having on buyers, sellers, lenders and the housing market. At NAR's urging, FHFA issued new guidance requiring servicers of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac loans to speed responses to short sale requests. NAR has also been working in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Treasury to organize Making Home Affordable "Help for Homeowners" outreach events throughout the country.

Condo Rules

In September, the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) issued a mortgagee letter announcing modest improvements to the treatment of condos under the FHA program, including expanding the ability to use FHA mortgages in mixed-use projects, and loosened some of the requirements

for investor owners and delinquent HOA dues, among other changes. At the urging of NAR, 69 Members of the House of Representatives wrote to the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) asking them to loosen restrictions on the sale of condominiums. Led by Representatives Fitzpatrick (R-PA) and Cleaver (D-MO), the letter focused on four major concerns with the current condo rules: treatment of delinquent dues, property certification requirements, owner-occupancy requirements, and treatment of commercial space. NAR continues to advocate with HUD for needed condo underwriting restrictions.

Bank of America Accepts Electronic Signatures on Short Sales and REO

At the urging of NAR, Bank of America now accepts electronic signatures on some documents collected during the short sale process.

For a complete list of NAR's legislative and regulatory accomplishments, visit www.REALTOR.org