



## 2010 Legislative Agenda. *Everyone should have the opportunity to live in a safe, decent, affordable home.*

The Washington Low Income Housing Alliance is committed to ensuring a safe, affordable home for every family and individual in Washington. In this time of economic crisis, even more families are struggling to keep a roof over their heads. By investing in affordable housing, we can address these needs while creating jobs and stimulating local economies.

### **Create, preserve and maintain quality affordable housing:**

- **Restore the State Housing Trust Fund to \$200 million and fund operations and maintenance of very low-income housing:** Washington State's Housing Trust Fund is the critical tool needed to create and preserve healthy, affordable housing. The Housing Trust Fund serves low- and moderate- income families and individuals, like entry-level teachers, service workers, and people leaving homelessness. More than **70% of Trust Fund units serve extremely low-income people**, making it a vital resource in the fight to end homelessness. Operating subsidies are essential to supplement rent revenue on units serving those with the lowest incomes.
- **Encourage the donation or sale of excess or underutilized public properties for affordable housing development:** The most significant cost for many affordable housing projects is the acquisition of land. By allowing nonprofits to access surplus lands it could substantially reduce the cost of developing affordable housing.
- **Ensure property tax assessments are commensurate with resale restrictions on affordable homes:** In most cases Washington homeowners of permanently affordable resale-restricted homes, such as community land-trusted properties, are paying taxes based on a valuation that far exceeds the restricted resale price of their property. Homeowners of resale restricted properties want to pay their fair share of taxes, but the assessment should accurately reflect the resale value of the property.

### **Prevent displacement and eliminate barriers to housing:**

- **Provide homeowners two years notice of intent to close manufactured housing communities:** Owners of manufactured housing are in a precarious and often vulnerable position when state law allows the landlord to sell the land, which can leave the homeowners with a mortgage on a home that they may not be able to move from the land. In order to give tenants the necessary time to plan for their future, these renters need two years notice of the landlord's intent to sell.
- **Create a fair tenant screening act to improve access to housing by removing unfair barriers and regulating tenant screening companies:** Tenant screening has grown into a considerable industry and is now a standard tool used by landlords statewide to select tenants, yet there is currently no regulatory framework for these companies. Screening companies have tremendous impacts on access to housing and Washington State should ensure that each company acts in a fair and consistent manner. Tenants should be allowed to see and purchase their own screening report in order to address inaccuracies and reduce the costs of moving.
- **Prevent foreclosures and protect consumers and communities:** Foreclosures in Washington State continue to impact many households and communities. As unemployment is extending the crises, Washington should enact a grace period from foreclosure for the unemployed. A fee on foreclosure filings should fund certified foreclosure prevention counselors to help struggling homeowners find the best solution and the current law should be strengthened to ensure that lenders offer homeowners good-faith options to save their home.