

Pass Key Fair Housing Legislation in the 113th Congress

In order to continue to ensure that everyone has access to housing of their choice through enforcement of our nation's fair housing and fair lending laws, several key pieces of legislation must be passed. The National Fair Housing Alliance recommends that Congress prioritize the following legislation during the 113th Congress.

Fair Housing Initiatives Program (FHIP) Funding

HUD's Fair Housing Initiatives Program (FHIP) is the only federal funding dedicated to support community-based private fair housing organizations in educating the public and the housing industry about our fair housing laws and enforcing those laws. Using FHIP funds, fair housing organizations investigate two-thirds of housing discrimination complaints nationwide, more than HUD, Justice and state and local agencies combined. Only 1% of housing discrimination complaints are investigated and more must be done to abate housing discrimination in our nation. FHIP should be funded at \$44.1 million for the remainder of FY2014. For FY2015, FHIP funding should be increased to \$52 million for fair housing enforcement and education, as recommended in 2008 by the bipartisan National Commission on Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity, co-chaired by former HUD Secretaries Henry Cisneros and Jack Kemp.

Home Opportunities Made Equal Act (HOME Act)

Many state and local fair housing laws have a wide range of protections that reflect the 21st century policies and priorities of our nation. However, the federal Fair Housing Act only protects against discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, religion, familial status, and disability. In the 113th Congress, the HOME Act (H.R. 2479/S. 1242) extended protections of the Fair Housing Act to people who are discriminated against based on their sexual orientation, gender identify, marital status, and source of income. The bill also strengthens other portions of the Fair Housing Act.

Housing Fairness Act of 2013

It is not enough to try to eliminate housing discrimination and promote residential diversity on a case-by-case basis. The Administration, including the Office of Management and Budget, HUD, DOJ and others, have supported systemic investigations and relief in order to achieve the mandate of the Fair Housing Act. In the 113th Congress, Representative Al Green (TX) has reintroduced the Housing Fairness Act of 2013 (H.R. 285). This legislation provides a significant boost to testing of systemic discrimination, enforcement by HUD and fair housing organizations, and funds a study to identify the causes of housing discrimination and segregation.

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