

WMFHA GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS 2009 LEGISLATIVE SESSION SUCCESS SHEET!



Facing a not too favorable economic and political climate WMFHA successfully tackled several issues that would have had a **significant financial impact** on our members. Given the current economic crises, some legislators and special interest groups were targeting rental property owners by: **demanding increased timelines for notice to vacate; increasing filing fees; raiding owner's interest acquired from safety deposits; and limiting information gathered from screening reports.** WMFHA will continue to be active in representing and protecting its members on these and other attempts to modify the residential landlord tenant act.

TERMINATION NOTICES. Proposed legislation would have changed the termination notices that landlords are required to give to a month-to-month tenant. The original bills **would have required landlords to give 30-days notice prior to the last day of the rental period for those residents living in the unit for less than a year and 60 days notice prior to the last day of the rental period for those residents living in the unit for more than 1 year.** The Senate bill was amended to require both landlords and tenants to give at least 30 days notice before the end of a rental period in order to terminate a month-to-month tenancy. WMFHA advocated for a change that would allow both the landlord and the tenant to terminate on **any day of the month** so long as at least 30 days' notice is given. Proponents of the bill would not acquiesce to our changes and the bill failed.

TENANT SCREENING AND EVICTIONS. This bill would have **severely limited the information** that screening companies could give to landlords **about previously filed eviction actions** involving the applicant. It would also have **allowed an applicant to take a screening from one property and use it at other properties** for the next 60 days. WMFHA representatives along with representatives of the screening industry presented united and effective opposition before legislators and were able to defeat the proposal in committee.

INTEREST ON SECURITY DEPOSITS. This bill would have **taken the interest earned on security deposits that currently goes to landlords** and give it to the state for "affordable housing programs." This proposal failed to make it out of committee thanks to WMFHA's opposition.

SOURCE OF INCOME. These bills would have added 'source of income' as a protected class – essentially **mandating landlords to accept tenants who are recipients of Section 8 housing vouchers.** WMFHA fought against these measures and has been successful in defeating them for the third consecutive year. WMFHA is consistent with our message that our members are not opposed to renting to the recipients of Section 8 vouchers, but rather have **concerns with being mandated to participate in a federal program that is not adequately funded or amiable to changes at the state level.**

Furthermore, we educate lawmakers by letting them know that there may be other reasons for tenants to be denied residency, **such as negative credit and or rental history**. We will continue to encourage legislators to first identify that there is indeed a problem with landlords not accepting Section 8 solely because it's Section 8; and also understand the administrative burdens associated with the program.

INCREASE IN COURT FILING FEES. In the last two weeks of session the multi-family housing industry was targeted with legislation that **threatened to place a 300% increase on the unlawful detainer filing fee**. The proposed legislation was introduced on April 15 and a public hearing was held on April 16. WMFHA's Joe Puckett testified against the bill and WMFHA Lobbyist, Kathryn Hedrick along with other members of the Washington Rental Housing Industry Coalition (WRHIC) lobbied lawmakers as to the negative effect this bill would have on the multi-family housing industry. **The industry was successful in lowering the increase from a proposed \$93 to \$30 and securing a two-year limit on the increase (the \$30 shall lapse in July 2011).**

WMFHA members step up to support 'Day on the Hill'

On January 29 over 20 WMFHA members went to Olympia to meet with legislators and inform them on the top issues affecting the industry.

WMFHA was joined by other multi-family housing industry groups for what **legislators stated was a very important educational opportunity**.

Special acknowledgement should go to Weidner (and Greg Cerbana) for having five participants engage in the day!



Stay tuned for information for next year's event so you too can attend!