

Date: February 26, 2009

To: Employees and Partners of Oregon Housing and
Community Services

From: Victor Merced

Re: Director's Bulletin – Housing Opportunity Bill Passed,
\$5 Million MacArthur Grant Rolled Out, Stimulus
Information Developing

This is a decisive day in the history of affordable housing in our great state.

I was honored this morning to announce a major award from the MacArthur Foundation for Oregon's affordable-housing preservation work. Shortly thereafter, the state Senate passed and sent to Gov. Kulongoski the Housing Opportunity Bill.

Housing Opportunity Bill. The Oregon Senate passed House Bill 2436 with 20 yes votes. Eighteen votes are needed to meet the super-majority requirement of this affordable-housing legislation, deemed to levy a tax. The House passed the bill last week.

Gov. Ted Kulongoski is expected to sign this hallmark legislation, currently predicted to raise about \$15 million in the 2009-11 biennium to support housing for Oregonians of modest means.

It will add a \$15 fee to documents recorded in Oregon and could raise up to \$40 million or more each biennium depending upon economic conditions in the state.

Sen. Betsy Johnson of Scappoose carried the bill with remarkable alacrity, invoking the increasing need for housing among families hit by the loss of construction jobs and the deserving-poor who are aged and disabled.

Sen. Rod Monroe of Portland called on his fellow lawmakers to support HB 2436: “Let’s give Oregonians a safe and stable place to raise families.”

This is vitally important in helping Oregon Department of Housing and Community Services serve the hard working people who struggle to pay the costs of housing.

HB 2436, introduced at the request of Oregon Housing Alliance, is supported by key private-sector trade groups: the Oregon Association of Realtors®, the Oregon Bankers Association and the Oregon Home Builders Association.

It dedicates revenue to affordable housing development, home-ownership assistance, increasing home ownership among minority populations, improving the capacity of local OHCS partners to develop affordable housing, and the emergency housing account, which addresses homelessness issues.

Oregon Housing and Community Services is proud to be associated with the Housing Alliance, the Realtors, Home Builders

and Bankers Association members in our mutual work to serve the housing needs of Oregonians.

MacArthur magnanimity. Shortly before passage of HB 2436, Sen. Johnson and Sen. Margaret Carter of Portland joined me in announcing to the press the [MacArthur award of \\$5 million](#) to the state. These funds will preserve thousands of subsidized rentals across Oregon by leveraging additional monies of \$10 to \$12 million.

Both senators gave ringing endorsements of the work we do at Oregon Housing and Community Services and the work of our partners in preserving for many years to come thousands of rental units nearing the end of their contracts for federal subsidy.

Sens. Carter and Johnson highlighted the power of public-private partnerships in multiplying the greater good from contributions such as MacArthur's \$5 million to Oregon. This includes the remarkable support in this endeavor from Meyer Memorial Trust, The Collins Foundation and The Oregon Community Foundation.

I cannot say enough to credit our remarkable partners – the Network for Oregon Affordable Housing and the City of Portland's Bureau of Housing and Community Development – who contributed to packaging the MacArthur application.

The people they serve are served well by their dedication to making Portland and Oregon a better place. They deserve great credit for helping garner the MacArthur funding.

Governor Kulongoski was unable to attend the press conference but he too lent his good name in bringing attention to the importance of the MacArthur money for Oregon. Our state is one

of 12 government entities receiving funds from this world-class foundation.

ARRA update. Details of the federal stimulus bill relating to housing are beginning to emerge. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (aka, ARRA; aka, stimulus bill) still has housing finance agencies such as Oregon Housing and Community Services piecing together the facts as they come to light.

We expect complete information toward the end of March. Until then, we will do our best to keep you informed through the OHCS Web site, OHCS technical advisories and links to [HUD information](#).

There are no days in life so memorable as those which vibrated to some stroke of the imagination.

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson