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**Advocacy Digest | June 2019**

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## **Bill to streamline building permit submittal moves forward**

## **Our efforts to streamline the process to apply for a one-two family building permit have taken a big step forward over the past few weeks. The bill, Assembly Bill 117 (AB 117)/Senate Bill 153 (SB 153), will make sure that an applicant is required to only submit a paper permit or an online permit but not both. The legislation also states that there are multiple options that the applicant can choose if asked to submit the permit in paper form.**

## **SB 153 was heard before the Senate Committee on Utilities and Housing where no objections were raised to the goals of the bill. AB 117 was recently voted out of the Assembly Committee on Housing and Real Estate on a unanimous, bipartisan vote of 9-0 and passed the full state assembly on a voice vote.**

## **We will be working to get the senate version of the bill, SB 153, voted out of committee over the summer so it can be available for a vote by the full state senate when they return during the week of September 16.**

**Campaigns announced for Wisconsin Supreme Court race in Spring 2020**

Recently current Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice Daniel Kelly announced his intention to seek reelection to the court for a 10-year term. Kelly was appointed by Governor Scott Walker to fill a vacancy in the court.

There is one announced candidate to challenge Kelly and another that is expected to announce soon. Dane County Judge Jill Karofsky announced her candidacy for Wisconsin’s highest court in early May.

It has been reported that Marquette University Law School Professor Ed Fallone is likely to make a run for the seat on the Wisconsin Supreme Court currently occupied by Justice Kelly.

Ultimately, if three or more candidates formally enter the race, a primary would be required on Tuesday, February 18, 2020 to narrow the field to two candidates. The Spring General Election will be held on Tuesday, April 7, 2020. The Spring General Election is the same day that Wisconsin Democrats will go to the poll to select their candidate preference to challenge President Trump in the fall. Political observers have speculated that this would favor a left lining judicial candidate (at this point either Karofsky or Fallone) because of all the effort that will be put in by democrat presidential candidates to get their supports to the polls in April.

**Standard Developer’s Agreement now available**

After several years in the making, a standard developer’s agreement is now available for download on the WBA website as a member benefit. A group of developers worked with WBA Outside Legal Counsel Robert Procter to select language from agreements that have worked well in the past and language that better reflects recently legislative changes affecting development.

The new form, available at [www.wisbuild.org/contracts-forms](http://www.wisbuild.org/contracts-forms), is saved as a Word document which can be used in its entirety or members are encouraged to use certain section of the document to supplement what they may already be using as an agreement.

We have also reached out to the Wisconsin League of Municipalities to see if it is possible to have a cobranded developer’s agreement that could be used and promoted by both organizations to further streamline the development process.

**From NAHB: Nearly 700 Members Shine a Spotlight on Housing Affordability in Hill Visits**

Nearly 700 NAHB members from across the nation converged on Capitol Hill today for NAHB’s 2019 Legislative Conference to urge their lawmakers to support policies that will increase the production of quality, affordable housing and keep the housing recovery moving forward.

“With housing affordability near a 10-year low, we are sending a loud and clear message to members of Congress that there is an urgent need to implement innovative solutions to ease the nation’s affordability woes and enable more families to achieve homeownership or have access to suitable rental housing,” said NAHB Chairman Greg Ugalde.

In nearly 300 individual meetings with their representatives and senators, builders discussed the following key housing issues:

Workforce and immigration. A chronic labor shortage in the housing industry is resulting in higher construction costs, increased home prices and lower economic growth. NAHB urged lawmakers to create a new, market-based guest worker program for the construction sector that will complement ongoing vocational training efforts and help fill labor gaps. Lawmakers were also encouraged to increase funding for job training programs to prepare individuals for careers in home building.

**Trade policy**. Builders asked their lawmakers to call on the administration to end tariffs on imports of softwood lumber, steel, aluminum and a wide variety of other goods used by the home building industry that are needlessly raising housing costs. NAHB also called on Congress to ensure swift ratification of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, which holds the potential to lift the housing economy.

**Housing finance reform**. Uncertainty about the housing finance system stymies investment and slows the housing market. NAHB called on Congress to pass bipartisan housing finance legislation that would reform the current system and provide certainty to the marketplace, while maintaining an appropriate level of government support for housing in all economic and financial conditions.

**Low-Income Housing Tax Credit.** To help spur the production of badly needed affordable rental housing, NAHB urged lawmakers to pass the Affordable Housing Credit Improvement Act. Introduced in the House and Senate earlier this week, the bipartisan legislation would improve the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit by establishing a permanent minimum 4 percent credit floor for acquisition and bond-financed projects. This would provide more flexibility in financing projects and significantly increase unit production.

**National Flood Insurance Program.** To continue the stability and growth of the housing market, it is essential that the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) remains available, affordable and financially stable. NAHB called on lawmakers to pass a long-term NFIP reauthorization.

**Building energy codes.** NAHB urged Congress to require any code or proposal supported by the Department of Energy to have a payback period of 10 years or less.

**Cluster mailboxes**. The U.S. Postal Service (USPS) has instituted a de facto mandate requiring mail delivery to cluster mailbox units in new residential developments. NAHB believes any reform effort for the USPS should not be funded by home builders and home owners. NAHB urged House lawmakers to co-sponsor a sense of the House resolution (H. Res. 23) that calls on the USPS to preserve delivery of mail to the home or business.

Sen. John Barrasso (R-Wyo.) addressed builders before their Hill visits and cited the need to reduce regulatory burdens and taxes to help the residential construction industry.

“I want you to be able to build faster, cheaper and smarter by getting rid of regulations and red tape,” said Barrasso. “If we want to grow the economy, we need to lower taxes and get rid of punishing regulations.”

The senator also expressed support for two other NAHB priorities: ratification of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement and a long-term reauthorization of NFIP.