



Legislator's open door to Housing Debate

By JAKE HENSHAW

SACRAMENTO • California's shortage of moderately priced housing, a long running problem that has been aggravated by the current economic boom is getting more attention this year in the Capitol. A group of legislators backed by a broad coalition, ranging from builders to anti-poverty workers, proposed several bills earlier this week to encourage construction of more affordable housing and other lawmakers are trying to put a housing bond on the November ballot. California is failing to provide affordable housing options for working families across the state • said Marc Brown of the California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation, an advocacy group for low-income groups, especially farm workers.

A few housing facts of life from public and private experts:

- In 1999, only 139,000 new homes were built.
- Only 56 percent of California households are homeowners compared to 67 percent nationwide.

- The state needs to add one house for every 1.5 jobs created. In San Francisco the ratio is one new house for every seven jobs in the San Francisco and in Los Angeles it is 1-to-6.
- A California family earning the state's median income of just under \$40,000 a year, needs another \$30,000 in income to afford a median-priced house costing \$225,000.

“In California, the mismatch between what people are earning and what it takes to buy a home is staggering, said Allan Zarembeg, president of the California Chamber of Commerce. He and other participants in the press conference highlighting the housing bills, said they fear that the continuing shortage of affordable housing will hurt the state's economy by making employers reluctant to expand or more here if their employees will have trouble finding suitable housing.

“It's a sad irony of our time that thousands of the union construction workers we represent are helping to build homes they cannot afford to buy, • said Jim Earp, executive director of the California Alliance for Jobs. “They are among the many working families who are being driven farther and farther from their places of employment by skyrocketing home prices. • /span>

In addition to legislation, lawmakers also are considering placing a bond issue on the November ballot to help fund construction of rental housing and homeownership. The amount being discussed is in the range of \$800 million. The governor appointed a housing task force also weighed in this year and in his proposed budget for next year with initiatives for a variety of groups including farm workers, migrants, renters and teachers in hard-to-staff districts.

- Senate Bill 1966 by Sen. Jim Brulte, R-Rancho Cucamonga: Calls for a detail analysis of local growth control ballot measures on regional economy, housing supply and the environment. The

analysis would be published before the vote.

- SB 1789 by Sen. Richard Rainey, R-Walnut Creek: Provides for a study of the obstacles to developing so called Brown Fields, • contaminated sites within urban areas.
- Assembly Bill 2048 by Assemblyman Tom Torlakson, D-Antioch: Allows communities that keep pace with housing needs to keep a larger share of property taxes.
- AB 2340 and AB 2343 by Assemblywoman Denise Ducheny, D-San Diego: Streamline environmental reviews, including a reduction of redundant studies, of developments for projects proposed for inner city spaces to prevent sprawl.
- AB 2041 by Assemblyman John Dutra, D-Fremont: Revises rules for use of redevelopment housing funds to increase flexibility for their use in helping to create jobs near housing.

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