

LWVO State House Day – March 7, 2017

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The Ohio Housing Trust Fund, a primary funding source for housing and homeless programs, continues to need our support for the valuable resources it provides to communities across the state. The creation of the trust fund back in 1991 and securing a dedicated funding stream in 2003 were both supported by LWVO.

There is a legislative cap of \$50 million per year that can be allocated for housing programs. Last session a Housing Trust Reserve Fund was created so that any of the dedicated revenue received above that amount up to \$15 million will be deposited in the reserve fund. In the past several years, revenues have been erratic - ranging from a high of \$73 million in 2005 to \$43.7 million in 2016. Once the reserve fund reaches \$15 million, any additional revenue will go to the state's General Revenue Fund. The reserve fund will be available when revenue falls short of \$50 million, and allow critically important programs to continue even in years when revenue declines.

Housing needs continue to outstrip funding. This year, the "Home Matters to Ohio" campaign hopes to add another \$15 million to increase support for homeless and housing initiatives, which include emergency shelter, construction, rehab and repair, handicapped accessibility modifications, rental assistance and down payment assistance and financial counseling for formerly homeless families. The campaign notes that increased funding not only meets Ohio's housing needs but addresses other public policy issues. Safe housing alleviates health issues such as asthma, child welfare issues such as school behavioral problems, and aids foster care placements of homeless children.

Each trust fund dollar leverages more than \$9 in private and federal matching funds and generates nearly \$15 in overall economic activity for Ohio. You can see how your county has benefited from the trust fund by going to www.development.ohio.gov/cs/cs_htf and looking at Beneficiaries. Click on your county for a listing of organizations, programs and dollars.

The Housing Trust Fund is administered by the Ohio Development Services Agency. Funds are allocated based on recommendations by a 14-member advisory committee and help low-income Ohioans.

TO DO: Your local League and other community organizations can sign on to the "Home Matters to Ohio" campaign by going to www.cohio.org/home-matters-to-ohio and completing the statement of support. Be sure your legislators know how the trust fund improves living conditions for the more vulnerable residents in your community. Housing needs are critical and the numbers of homeless persons are growing.