

LWV Ohio Statehouse Day – March 19, 2013

LWVO Lobbyist Report

Protect the Housing Trust Fund

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The governor's proposed budget for the 2013-14 biennium has recommended full funding for the Ohio Housing Trust Fund, the fund that provides local organizations with the means to serve the critical housing needs in their communities. The fund is projected to receive the same appropriation as in the previous budget, an appropriation that is capped at \$53 million annually. The creation of the trust fund back in 1991 and securing a dedicated funding stream in 2003 were both supported by LWV Ohio.

While housing needs continue to outstrip funding, advocates are happy that no reduction in the appropriation is proposed. The need now is to protect the dollars from being raided for other programs. It's also possible that the dedicated funding, county recordation fees on real estate transactions, could be jeopardized if those county recorders who seek to keep the fees within their own county were to prevail in the legislature.

The Housing Trust Fund is administered by the Ohio Development Services Agency (formerly the Ohio Department of Development), Office of Community Development. It supports a range of housing needs, including emergency shelter, construction, rehab and repair, handicapped accessibility modifications, rental assistance and down payment assistance and financial counseling for formerly homeless families. Funds are allocated based on recommendations by a 14-member advisory committee, and are targeted toward helping low-income Ohioans.

A study of the economic and job creation impact of the trust fund was commissioned by the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio (COHHIO) in 2011; the study found that "each dollar of OHTF awards results in an overall impact of \$14.54 because the awards attract other funds and their collective infusion into the regional economy results in direct, indirect and induced expenditures in many industries."

You can see how your county has benefited from the trust fund by going to www.development.ohio.gov/cs/cs_hf and looking at Beneficiaries by County. Just click on your county on the state map for a listing of organizations, programs and dollar amounts.

The Message: Become familiar with the programs funded by the Housing Trust Fund in your county, and advocate for them with your representatives. Be especially alert if your representative sits on the House Agriculture and Development Subcommittee or the House Finance and Appropriations Committee.