



Eye on the Hill August 2008

NAR achieved victory on a milestone housing bill that is the culmination of years of intense lobbying efforts. Long before the collapse of the subprime mortgage market and the resultant market instability, NAR had been advocating for the housing reform measures contained in **H.R. 3221, the “Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008.”** The bill passed the House on July 23, 2008, by a vote of 272-152. On Saturday, July 26, 2008, the Senate passed the bill by a vote of 72-13. The President signed the bill on July 30, 2008. **Listed below are the key provisions for REALTORS®:**

Freddie Mac/Fannie Mae (Government Sponsored Enterprise) Reform – including a strong independent regulator, and permanent conforming loan limits up to the greater of \$417,000 or 115% local area median home price, capped at \$625,500. The effective date for reforms is immediate upon enactment, but the loan limits will not go into effect until the expiration of the Economic Stimulus limits (December 31, 2008). This reform keeps the GSEs strong and focused on the housing finance market. [View 2009 FHA and GSE loan limit estimates \(PDF\)](#)

FHA Reform – including permanent FHA loan limits at the greater of \$271,050 or 115% of local area median home price, capped at \$625,500; streamlined processing for FHA condos; reforms to the HECM program, and reforms to the FHA manufactured housing program. The downpayment requirement on FHA loans will go up to 3.5% (from 3%). The effective date for reforms is immediate upon enactment, but the loan limits will not go into effect until the expiration of the Economic Stimulus limits (December 31, 2008). The reform package makes FHA a stronger, more modern and flexible program. [View 2009 FHA and GSE loan limit estimates \(PDF\)](#)
[FHA Reform Chart \(PDF\)](#)

Homebuyer Tax Credit - a \$7500 tax credit that would be available for any qualified purchase between April 9, 2008 and June 30, 2009. The credit is repayable over 15 years (making it, in effect, an interest free loan). The tax credit is design to “push” fence sitters into the market reducing inventory. [First-time homebuyer tax credit chart](#)
[Frequently asked questions about the first-time homebuyer tax credit](#)

FHA foreclosure rescue – development of a refinance program for homebuyers with problematic subprime loans. Lenders would write down qualified mortgages to 85% of the current appraised value and qualified borrowers would get a new FHA 30-year fixed mortgage at 90% of appraised value. Borrowers would have to share 50% of all future appreciation with FHA. The loan limit for this program is \$550,440 nationwide. Program is effective on October 1, 2008. This rescue plan is aimed at stabilizing the housing economy. [FHA Foreclosure Rescue Chart](#)

Seller-funded downpayment assistance programs – codifies existing FHA proposal to prohibit the use of downpayment assistance programs funded by those who have a financial interest in the sale; does not prohibit other assistance programs provided by nonprofits funded by other sources, churches, employers, or family members. This prohibition does not go into effect until October 1, 2008. [More about the seller-funded downpayment assistance provision](#)
[Tips to finding downpayment assistance programs \(PDF\)](#)

VA loan limits – temporarily increases the VA home loan guarantee loan limits to the same level as the Economic Stimulus limits through December 31, 2008.

Risk-based pricing – puts a moratorium on FHA using risk-based pricing for one year. This provision is effective from October 1, 2008 through September 30, 2009.

GSE Stabilization – includes language proposed by the Treasury Department to authorize Treasury to make loans to and buy stock from the GSEs to make sure that Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae could not fail.

Mortgage Revenue Bond Authority – authorizes \$10 billion in mortgage revenue bonds for refinancing subprime mortgages.

National Affordable Housing Trust Fund – Develops a Trust Fund funded by a percentage of profits from the GSEs. In its first years, the Trust Fund would cover costs of any defaulted loans in FHA foreclosure program. In out years, the Trust Fund would be used for the development of affordable housing.

Community Development Block Grant Funding – Provides \$4 billion in neighborhood revitalization funds for communities to purchase foreclosed homes.

[More about the CDBG funding provision](#)

LIHTC – Modernizes the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program to make it more efficient.

Loan Originator Requirements – Strengthens the existing state-run nationwide mortgage originator licensing and registration system (and requires a parallel HUD system for states that fail to participate). Federal bank regulators will establish a parallel registration system for FDIC-insured banks. The purpose is to prevent fraud and require minimum licensing and education requirements. NAR secured an exemption for a REALTOR® who only performs real estate brokerage activities and are licensed or registered by a state, unless they are compensated by a lender, mortgage broker, or other loan originator.