

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®

EYE ON THE HILL

*By Jerry Giovaniello
Chief Lobbyist & Senior Vice President
of Government Affairs*



Congress Convenes

The 110th Congress hit the ground running earlier this month and REALTORS® are matching their pace stride for stride. On the very first day of legislative action REALTOR® Champion Representatives Paul E. Kanjorski (D-PA) and Ken Calvert (R-CA) introduced **H.R. 111, the Community Choice in Real Estate Act of 2007**. The bill has already gathered the support of **more than one-hundred Members of Congress** and will continue to pick-up additional co-sponsors as Congress moves forward. The change in control of Congress gives REALTORS® an opportunity to work with a new slate of Congressional leaders and Committee Chairs. For many organizations in Washington, D.C. the change in control presents a significant challenge. Since our issues transcend party affiliation and geography, REALTORS® are poised to work with our old friends in their new positions.

Government Affairs January Meetings

Traditionally Congress spends the month of January dealing with internal operations rather than considering legislation. This year, the new Democratic leadership tossed tradition out the window and began the people's business immediately. **The early start to the new Congress** turned out to be a remarkable benefit for more than **one-thousand REALTORS®** who attended the 2007 Government Affairs January Meetings.

REALTOR® volunteers serving as fundraising chairs for state and local associations, members of the REALTORS® Political Involvement Committee, State Association Presidents and Executive Officers and our Federal Political Coordinators gathered in Washington, D.C. for a series of specialized training seminars, panel presentations and addresses from **Senator Ben Nelson (D-NE), Senator Joseph Lieberman (I-CT), Congresswoman Maxine Waters (D-CA), Congressman Marion Berry (D-AR) and Congressman Steve Chabot (R-OH)**.

The Congressional speakers are all members of the **REALTOR® Party**. They gained membership based on their outstanding record of support for REALTOR® public policy issues on Capitol Hill, not party affiliation or what state or district they represent. Each of these REALTOR® Party Champions understands importance of the real estate industry to the national economy and the importance of homeownership to building strong and stable communities. They also understand that REALTORS® support their friends all the time, not just at election time. One of the most important aspects of this ongoing support is our strong grassroots program.

Senator Lieberman highlighted the high level of REALTOR® involvement in his 2006 re-election campaign. The Senator specifically thanked the **Connecticut Association of REALTORS®** and **NAR Political Field Staff** who helped ensure his re-election. While introducing Senator Nelson to the conference attendees, we displayed a copy of the postcard sent to **REALTORS® in Nebraska** and viewed the NAR produced television commercial that ran throughout the state during the campaign.

Developing REALTOR® Party Priorities

The combination of our strong grassroots program and having the resources available to produce quality materials in support of our REALTOR® Party Champions is what separates NAR from other organizations. The January Government Affairs Meeting are also an integral part of making our programs so effective in promoting and protecting the real estate at the local, state and federal levels. REALTOR® volunteers travel to Washington to help determine the scope and direction of our public policy agenda.

This year, for the first time, REALTOR® members had the opportunity to identify and **prioritize public policy issues** before arriving in Washington, D.C. The NAR Research staff polled more than **13,000 REALTOR® Members, Association Executives and industry leaders** to determine which issues are of paramount importance in 2007. The poll results and the development of a public policy priority agenda were the topics of a spirited discussion in a Town Hall meeting moderated by **Dale Stinton, NAR's Chief Executive Officer**. During the Town hall meeting it was evident that there was a broad consensus that some issues may not require REALTOR® action unless a specific threat develops during this Congress. Other issues may move up or down the priority list as a result of Congressional action. Working together we developed a strong plan of action that will be reviewed by the NAR Leadership Team in early February.