

Virginia Housing Coalition Legislative Report Card 2009 – A Solid B+

The halls are quiet and the smoke has cleared. It's safe to venture back onto the Capital grounds. The General Assembly has finished its session amidst very difficult economic and budget circumstances and has "left the building" for another year.

This year marked a significant change in legislative strategy for the Housing Coalition. For the past several years, the Coalition had focused solely on the Housing Trust Fund ... and while progress was made, the goal was not achieved. This year, the Coalition adopted and advocated for a broader agenda that included six objectives. Now that the results are in, it's time to grade our efforts and send our report card to you, the members.

<i>Legislative Issue</i>	<i>Bills & Patrons</i>	<i>Result</i>	<i>Grade</i>
Create a Virginia Housing Trust Fund with a dedicated source of revenue. This year's bill would allocate 10% of the State's surplus – a mechanism that successfully funds the Water Quality Fund.	Senator Whipple: SB1055	The bill passed the Senate (for the first time ever) but died in House Appropriations after lively policy debate. The Coalition will re-double its efforts next year.	B
Modify the Livable Home Tax Credit so that it will actually provide a real incentive for residential accessibility improvements.	Delegate Peace: HB1938 and Senator Puller – SB845	These bills passed and will double the credit rate and increase the cap four fold next year.	A+
Require localities to address the need for affordable housing in the planning for Urban Development Areas (UDA's).	Senator Vogel; SB1487	The bill was passed but amended so that localities "may" rather than "shall" address this issue.	B
Create a uniform definition for "derelict" structures to enhance the ability of localities to address neighborhood blight.	Delegate Dance – HB1671 and Senator Locke – SB1094	These bills passed and the new law will provide another tool for neighborhood preservation.	A
Require lenders to supply information to localities on foreclosed and vacant properties to allow jurisdictions to make effective neighborhood preservation plans.	Delegate Rust: HB2150	This bill passed and applies to jurisdictions in Northern Virginia where the foreclosure problem is most severe.	A
Create clear enabling legislation that permits all jurisdictions in the State to create flexible local housing trust funds.	N/A	No legislation was introduced this year. The Coalition will push this issue again in 2010.	Incomplete

Overall, we are very pleased with the results from this year's session. Although the Housing Trust Fund did not pass, we came closer than ever and we are more energized than ever to make the Trust Fund a reality in Virginia. **Overall, we give the VHC legislative agenda for 2009 a B+**, and look forward to beginning the work of developing next year's agenda in the months ahead. This process will begin with a series of regional meetings this spring. Please stay tuned for dates and locations.