



The Huntsville Times

Bill would help boost housing for poor

Wednesday, April 01, 2009

By **BOB LOWRY**

Times Staff Writer bob.lowry@htimes.com

Hall co-sponsors plan to establish relief trust fund

MONTGOMERY - Legislation that would address the state's affordable housing crisis for low-income residents was filed Tuesday by a Huntsville lawmaker.

The bill, co-sponsored by Reps. Laura Hall, D-Huntsville, and Patricia Todd, D-Birmingham, would establish the Alabama Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

Hall said at a press conference the fund would be created in the state treasury and funded through a mortgage recording tax of .05 percent for each \$100 of a mortgage recording fee.

The goals of the legislation are to make sure that more housing units are affordable for the poor, renovate and preserve affordable housing units and increase home ownership.

Despite the late introduction of the bill during this session of the Legislature, Hall said she is optimistic it could win passage because of the critical condition of Alabama's economy. The Legislature has 15 days remaining in this session.

"I think the chances are pretty good," she said. "Last week, we passed a bill in the House that would help by allocating \$1 million to help those individuals that are in the process of foreclosure."

An 11-member board of government and industry representatives would oversee and manage the trust fund, and target individuals and families living at or below 60 percent of the median income of the applicant's area.

Marcie Porter, president of the Birmingham-based Low Income Housing Coalition of Alabama, said Alabama is one of only seven states that does not have a affordable housing trust fund.

Porter said the state has an estimated shortage of nearly 45,000 affordable and available housing units.

"Given the current economic environment and the foreclosure crisis, the ability of every person to secure safe, decent and affordable housing is on the minds of all Alabamians," she said.

©2009 Huntsville

© 2009 al.com All Rights Reserved.