



Vermont Housing Finance Agency

# news release

Toll Free in Vermont 800/339-5866

From Chittenden County: 802/864-5743

**Mailing Address:**

PO Box 408  
Burlington, VT 05402-0408

**Street Address:**

164 Saint Paul Street  
Burlington, VT 05401-4364

Send e-mail to: [home@vhfa.org](mailto:home@vhfa.org)

Visit our web site: [www.vhfa.org](http://www.vhfa.org)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CONTACT: MAURA COLLINS**

(802) 598-8036

[mcollins@vhfa.org](mailto:mcollins@vhfa.org)

**HUNDREDS CONVENE AT VERMONT STATEWIDE HOUSING CONFERENCE**

*Expert speakers and participants weigh competing needs for housing assistance*

BURLINGTON, VT — About 450 policy makers, housing developers, lenders and advocates convened today to learn from national and state leaders and to identify the state's most pressing housing issues. The conference was kicked off by Governor Shumlin as he discussed his priorities for housing, followed by interactive instant polling designed to capitalize on this rare convening of the state's full cadre of housing voices. Polling results showed little disagreement among conference participants about the severity of the state's shortage of housing affordable to low-income Vermonters.



Keynote speaker Barry Zigas of the Consumer Federation of American and the Bipartisan Policy Center's Housing Commission described the demographic and budget drivers affecting housing conditions today. He explained that indisputable trends, such as aging seniors, tightening credit and falling homeownership rates among young households, led to the Commission's unanimous support for increased affordable housing. These recommendations include extending the availability of rental assistance to the lowest income households, rapid re-housing for those who lose their housing and rebuilding the mortgage finance system to increase private investment.

Thought-provoking workshop presenters included Anthony Poore of the Boston Federal Reserve Bank who discussed the state's declining number of young home buyers and burgeoning student debt levels. "Housing Hero" awards were presented to former state Senator Susan Bartlett and Representative Martha Heath for their leadership, commitment, and courage to find balance between Vermont's budget and values.

The Vermont Statewide Housing Conference is coordinated by the Vermont Housing Finance Agency on behalf of a multi-agency planning committee: Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity, Housing Vermont, USDA Rural Development, VT Affordable Housing Coalition, VT's Department of Housing and Community Development, VT Housing & Conservation Board, VT Housing Finance Agency, VT Mortgage Bankers Association and VT Realtors.