

NEIGHBORHOOD OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

DeLeo applauds NOAH, reaffirms commitment to programs that help families find a place to call home

STORY AND PHOTOS
By JOHN LYND

Speaker of the House and former East Boston resident Robert DeLeo was this year's keynote speaker at the Neighborhood of Affordable Housing's (NOAH) annual meeting at Spinelli's last Thursday.

In front of a packed room of over 200 guests DeLeo thanked NOAH for its continued commitment to help low-income residents here and around the state and reaffirmed support to programs that promote fairness, equality, respect, compassion,

"I would first like to take a moment to thank NOAH for their outstanding contributions to our community and the Commonwealth as a whole," said DeLeo. "NOAH's dedication to helping low-income families and other disadvantaged groups is simply inspirational. For twenty-four years, NOAH has been helping hundreds upon hundreds of struggling families find a place to call home. Their warmth and kindness have changed the lives of so many."

With its mission to fight for quality affordable housing in the state, equality for low-income families and programs that help lend a voice to those struggling, DeLeo said NOAH's ideals are the very foundation of our success in government.

"Fairness, equality, respect, compassion, and loyalty," said DeLeo, "as elected officials, we strive to uphold these values and ensure justice and integrity in our Commonwealth even in these tough economic times."

On the state's economy DeLeo said that he is proud of what the Legislature has been able to do kick start the economy and foster job growth.

"After passing groundbreaking reform legislation, redrawing district maps, and establishing a fiscally-sound budget, the House also approved major legislation to grow jobs in Massachusetts," said DeLeo. "Working together on a wide range of bills, we were able to pass legislation that will stimulate our economy and improve the lives of people and families across the Commonwealth."

DeLeo's optimism of better days ahead was evident as he commented that despite a tough budget situation, Massachusetts is faring a lot better than other states, largely because representatives of government, business and labor are doing a better job of listening and working together to solve the problem problems.

"This morning our new unemployment numbers came out. For the month of November the unemployment rate in Massachusetts dropped from 7.3% to 7.0%, the lowest it has been since December 2008," said DeLeo. "This is far lower than the national unemployment rate for the month at 8.6%. I'm proud to say that with more people getting back to work, we're seeing

an increase in our tax receipts and Standard and Poor's upgraded the Commonwealth's bond rating from AA to AA+. This credit rating is the highest credit standing in the history of Massachusetts."

With the economy showing an upswing in the state, DeLeo said it was still important for him to focus the legislature's efforts on groups and families that are feeling the full effects of this recession.

"We need to continue our commitment to those struggling to find work, pay the rent, or feed their children – and I know NOAH plays a huge role in this," said DeLeo. "With that being said, the House has been working on a lot of legislation to address this issue."

Just recently, the House passed the State Low Income Housing tax credit bill that provides \$9.5 million to the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Fund.

"This bill is crucial to



Speaker of the House Robert DeLeo.



Boston City Councilor Sal LaMattina.

Community Development Corporations (CDC) and to underprivileged families and groups as it funds the development and building of affordable housing," said DeLeo. "The House also passed Economic Development Reorganization legislation that established a CDC certification program, creating the Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation—a key source of technical and financial support for all small businesses and CDCs."

DeLeo said it was important to do this because during these difficult financial times, housing has remained an important part of the state's economic success.

"It is workforce housing, after all, that attracts and retains employees who work for our hospitals, universities and other industries," said DeLeo.

As of right now, the House Ways and Means Committee is working on two pieces of legislation that could greatly impact CDCs.

"The Act to Sustain Community Preservation aims to expand and diversify funding for local Community

Preservation Committees across the Commonwealth," he said.

The second, DeLeo said, was a highly anticipated piece of legislation called the Community Development Partnership Act (CDPA).

"The CDPA aims to support community-led economic development initiatives through a strategic, market-based approach that is sustainable and efficient," said DeLeo. "This bill would make CDCs eligible to apply through a competitive process to receive up to \$150,000 in state tax credits per year for three years."

CDCs would then use those credits to attract up to \$300,000 per year in private investment from corporations and individuals.

"As part of the legislation, CDCs would be encouraged to develop multi-year business plans that lay out the needs and priorities of their community," said DeLeo. "The Department of Housing and Community Development would then select the best plans and award them the tax credit allocation."

