



Everything Jersey

N.J.'s Council on Affordable Housing may be flawed, but it's created needed housing

By NJ Voices Guest Blogger/For NJ.com

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By Elizabeth S. Hall/ NJ Voices Guest Blogger

Gov. **Chris Christie**, when you signed the executive order on Feb. 9 suspending the operations of the Council on Affordable Housing, you were quoted as saying the municipalities' "nightmare" is now over.

Even though the executive order has been stayed, the sentiment in the order is not helpful to New Jersey citizens who need affordable housing. While some municipalities have worked not to provide housing affordable to people working in their towns, many have made great efforts to not only comply with the law but to enhance their workforce and the quality of life of all their constituents.

There are many issues with the administration of the Mt. Laurel court decision. However, the humanitarian goal of providing decent affordable housing throughout the state is a noble and just cause.



Tony Kurdzuk/The Star-Ledger

Gov. Chris Christie waves to the crowd after taking the oath of office at the Trenton War Memorial.

The state's housing delivery system may be flawed but it has been highly successful in creating homes New Jersey families and individuals desperately need. If the Governor's moratorium stands, the creation of urgently needed homes has ground to a halt. In addition not only homes, but jobs, will be lost.

COAH has problems and needs to be fixed. It presents a zoning problem to municipal planners, and has become a headache for some local politicians. But the greater crisis, Gov. Christie, is faced by the men and women who are trying to raise families and hold down jobs in this great state.

The United Way of Morris County has issued a study of a composite person named ALICE —residents who are Asset Limited, Income Constrained, and Employed. ALICE makes up 23 percent of the county—households earning between \$20,000 and \$60,000 per year. These are our family members, our friends and neighbors, and often they are people whose work we depend on every day.

In conjunction with Sen. **Raymond Lesniak's** S.1 proposal, Gov. Christie, you may well be successful in "closing down" COAH -- but what then? You have both spoken of the need for a comprehensive approach to planning for the state's future. Unfortunately, neither the executive order nor S.1 constitutes a comprehensive approach.

The state is in dire need of a plan for future development that incorporates jobs, transportation and the environment, as well as homes. Let's have sound planning and a comprehensive approach. Gov. Christie, don't let the nightmare of stacking and substandard housing for working families be the answer to New Jersey's housing

crisis.

There are ways to make the housing delivery system function more effectively and efficiently that do not require a moratorium on building. We in the community development field want to share our ideas and expertise and be a part of the solutions. The task force you, Governor, have appointed does not include any community development expertise.

The non-profit sector is a large part of the solution. Excluding us at this critical time for change is not conducive to generating the most effective outcomes. We stand ready and willing to help fix the housing delivery system.

As a developer of affordable housing in Morris County, I know the difficulties we face trying to build and renovate housing for working families. But the difficulties can, and should, be worked out. And it will take you, Gov. Christie, to take a stance in support of affordable housing for all New Jersey residents.

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