



## Legislation Summary:

### **An Act financing the production and preservation of housing for low and moderate income residents**

Initial bill number: [H675](#) (Bill numbers will change as legislation proceeds.)

Sponsors: Rep. Kevin G. Honan , Sen. Linda Dorcea Forry

The bill proposes \$1.7 billion in bonds through the capital budget for affordable housing over five years, producing new units and purchasing housing units that have had affordable restrictions that are expiring. It also increases and extends the state Low Income Housing Tax Credit, and makes some changes to current laws that affect affordable housing. Borrowing by the state to maintain and improve existing affordable housing and to build much-needed new units is essential to continuing the Commonwealth's commitment to decent housing for those who cannot afford market prices.

Large bonding bills are done periodically, and LWVMA supported the last one about five or six years ago. We have also supported bills to purchase affordable housing when affordable restrictions are ending. Unfortunately, the economic situation has not been helpful. Homelessness has more than doubled since the 1990s, and the number of people living in poverty increased in the last decade, with some levelling off last year.

The bill deals with many aspects of the housing crisis in Massachusetts where the improving economy has pushed housing costs well beyond people of modest means, particularly in the Eastern part of the state. The state has established a right to housing, which carries the obligation to house those who become homeless.

The bill also attempts to assist particular populations with unmet specialized needs for housing such as persons with disabilities or mental illness. Local Housing Authorities have been struggling to accommodate growing numbers of individuals with disabilities and families that include a person with a disability and wish to remodel some of the existing facilities appropriately or build new units that meet ADA codes.

**League position:** The LWVUS position is found under Meeting Basic Human Needs, in the section "Criteria for Housing Supply," Impact on Issues 2016-2018, pp. 93-94. In brief, the League supports "programs and policies to provide a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family." Although the position places primary responsibility on the federal government, it expects state and local governments to assist and states that "Government at all levels must make available sufficient funds for housing-assistance programs."

LWVMA also has a position on Affordable Housing that supplements the national position. Two parts are relevant to this bill. They are support for: "Restrictions on affordable rental and ownership housing

units so that the units remain affordable in perpetuity” and “Streamlined permitting procedures for Smart Growth incentive programs that effectively encourage the use of Smart Growth principles, with funding sources that are consistent, reliable and predictable.”