



Oregon
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Housing and
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News Release - For Immediate Release

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Housing Conference Looks At Challenges and Solutions for Affordable Housing

Salem, Oregon (February 26, 2007) - Salem will be the center of attention on April 24 and 25 as affordable housing advocates from around the State of Oregon will gather to discuss the tools and strategies at the 2007 Oregon Housing Conference. Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) will host the conference.

“Oregon is known for its livability and progressive thought towards meeting the needs of its diverse population. New efforts are being made every day at the state and private levels towards preserving existing affordable housing, revitalizing housing in downtown areas, as well as funding methods to develop critical and specialized housing in communities,” said Victor Merced, Director, Oregon Housing and Community Services. “As housing needs are identified, there are programs and innovative financing tools available to help communities through the development and housing maze.”

Conference attendees can choose workshops from a variety of topics including sustainable building practices, implementing resident services into housing development, opportunities for current and future energy independence, developing a 10-year plan to end homelessness, assistive technology, the *Oregon Thrives* vision, as well many other topics. Attendees will also have an opportunity to interact with panelists from each of the work sessions as well as the keynote speakers.

Jeff Merkley, a State Representative serving House District 47 in Portland and the Speaker of the Oregon House of Representatives, will be the keynote speaker during the closing luncheon and awards ceremony on April 25. Jeff earned an undergraduate degree from Stanford University and holds a Masters Degree in Public Policy from Princeton University. In 1982, he served as a Presidential Management Intern with the Office of the Secretary of Defense serving on various committees and assisting the US Delegation to NATO.

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He also served Congress as a budget and policy analyst in the Congressional Budget Office generating studies on the nation's options for strategic weapons. In Oregon, Jeff has served as the Executive Director of the Portland Habitat for Humanity, as the Director of Housing Development at Human Solutions and most recently, as the President of the World Affairs Council of Oregon for seven years and continues to serve on the board of trustees. In 2006, he was elected by the Full House to serve as the Speaker of the Oregon House of Representatives.

On Thursday, April 25 during the closing luncheon, OHCS will host an awards celebration to present the annual Excellence in Housing awards to recognize outstanding contributions by individuals and organizations to promote, provide, sponsor, finance and develop affordable housing in Oregon. According to OHCS Director Victor Merced, "Through the efforts of housing developers, community service organizations, housing authorities, and others, many lower income Oregonians now find their daily challenges less overwhelming. They now have access to necessary supportive services and can call home a place where they feel safe, interact with their neighbors, and become part of a community."

Individuals can register for the conference online at:

www.ohcs.oregon.gov/OHCS/SAS_2007_Housing_Conference.shtml#Agenda_and_Registration or request a registration brochure by calling 503.986.2012. For additional information on the 2007 Oregon Housing Conference, visit www.ohcs.oregon.gov/OHCS/SAS_2007_Housing_Conference.shtml or contact Sandy McDonnell at 503.986.2012 or email sandy.mcdonnell@hcs.state.or.us.

OHCS is the State's housing finance agency and community services program administrator. The Department provides financial and program support to create and preserve opportunities for quality, affordable housing for Oregonians of lower and moderate income and administers federal and state antipoverty, homeless, energy assistance and community service programs. The OHCS mission is to "Reach out for opportunities to create partnerships that improve Oregonians' lives, and the quality of our communities." For more information, visit our web site at www.ohcs.oregon.gov.