



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®

The Voice For Real Estate®

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**HEARING BEFORE THE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS, AND PUBLIC LANDS**

ON THE SUBJECT OF

**H.R. 3425 – TO AUTHORIZE THE FAIR HOUSING COMMEMORATIVE
FOUNDATION TO ESTABLISH A COMMEMORATIVE WORK ON FEDERAL LAND IN
THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA TO COMMEMORATE THE ENACTMENT OF THE FAIR
HOUSING ACT IN 1968**

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF

BRENDA SMALL, PRESIDENT, WASHINGTON, DC ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®

ON BEHALF OF

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®

FEBRUARY 25, 2010

Good Morning, I am Brenda Small, President of the Washington, DC Association of REALTORS®. I am speaking today on behalf of the National Association of REALTORS® (NAR), which represents 1.2 million REALTORS® across the country. Engaged in all aspects of the real estate industry, NAR's members strongly support H.R. 3425, which would authorize the Fair Housing Commemorative Foundation to establish a commemorative work celebrating the Fair Housing Act of 1968.

Washington, DC has so much to offer, historically and culturally. Our members are proud that our Washington, DC, headquarters, is right here in close proximity to many of these monuments to our nation's history and ideals.

I could not testify here today without honestly acknowledging that like many Americans, many of our REALTOR® associations in the past have not always accepted or reflected the mosaic blend of America's diversity.

So I am especially proud to be here today to testify on the importance of diversity in homeownership in America, and equal access to rental housing, as well as to celebrate the great progress that this nation and the real estate industry has made in the years since the passage of the Fair Housing Act.

NAR and its affiliated state and local associations' today also reflect and represent a tapestry of different faces, different places, ideas, talents, intellects, interests and passions. Today, I can proudly say that the neighborhoods where we live and work and the consumers we serve are just as diverse.

To that end, we support the creation of a memorable piece of art, a Monument to the Fair Housing Act, which has benefited all Americans.

The Fair Housing Act ensures that regardless of race or color, national origin, religion, gender, familial status, or disability, we all have equal access to housing and the right to pursue the American Dream.

REALTORS® help put new faces in homes throughout this nation, faces that represent the mosaic of America. What we do for a living is create opportunities for homeownership and equity building for millions of Americans.

The Fair Housing Act is the solid foundation that helps us protect private property rights, provide equal access to rental housing and homeownership opportunities, ensure compliance with the law in real estate and mortgage activities, and further our goals for increased, affordable, and sustainable homeownership within the reach of all Americans.

This foundation of protection and opportunity has also served to create more vibrant communities where homeowners are more civically involved, children excel in the classroom, and our American culture is enhanced by diversified neighborhoods.

While we have accomplished much in building these foundations, we still have work to do. We still have education to do. I have experienced race discrimination firsthand during my time in the real estate profession, sometimes direct, often times subtle, and always disturbing. It comes in the form of the rejection of my services as a real estate professional, and even occasions where contract offers were rejected based on the assumption of race of the client being represented.

The Fair Housing Act protects my right to practice my profession in three significant ways:

First, it prohibits my exclusion on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status, or disability in organizations of real estate professionals. The National Association of REALTORS® affirmatively protects my right to be a REALTOR® and prohibits actions that might exclude me on the basis of these characteristics.

Second, the Fair Housing Act protects me from retaliation should I exercise my rights or help anyone else exercise their rights under the Fair Housing Act. Even today, there are incidents of bigoted neighbors threatening REALTORS® and minority buyers who try to buy property.

Third, every time a buyer or seller I am working with is a victim of housing discrimination—whether for race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status, or disability—everyone loses a bit of dignity and respect, and it continues to reinforce the need for the focus on and enforcement of fair housing.

Thus, what better message to send to all Americans than to establish a permanent monument dedicated to Fair Housing right here in the nation's Capitol: A fixed reminder, both now and in the future, that the American Dream of Homeownership is, and should be available to all Americans.

The progress we have made and the work remaining was and will be accomplished by many Americans, from those who bravely exercised their fair housing rights in the face of violence, to the community voices for fair housing, to REALTORS® who challenged practices and helped people find the housing they needed.

While we have made great strides and accomplished much to promote and foster fair housing, there is more to do to inspire us and future generations to be vigilant in protecting some of our most basic rights: the rights to property and housing. We want to see the hard won struggles to make fair housing a reality and the positive influence fair housing has had on our society commemorated by the establishment of a Fair Housing Monument in this city and urge you to support H.R. 3425.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this worthy endeavor.