

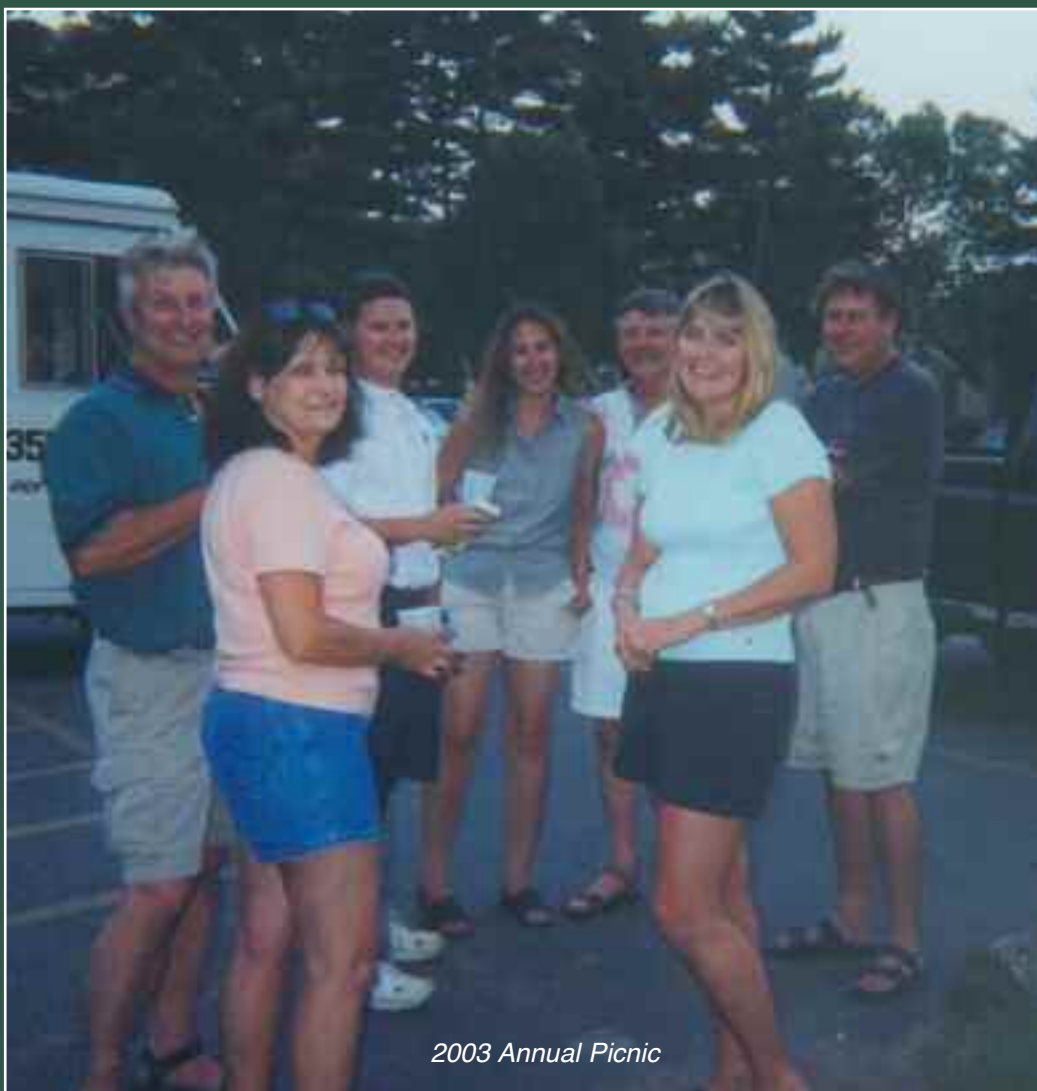
LET'S LEVEL

the Official Publication of the Wausau Area Builders Association

**AUGUST 2012
VOLUME 31 - ISSUE 8**

**SEE INSIDE FOR
MORE PICTURES!**

REMEMBER *when?*



2003 Annual Picnic



2005 WBA Convention



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Sporting Clay Larry Meyer

LET'S LEVEL

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MISSION STATEMENT:

The Wausau Area Builders Association, chartered in 1967 and affiliated with the Wisconsin Builders Association and National Association of Home Builders, is a professional non-profit trade association. Serving the community we represent the interests and concerns of the consumer, building trades, industry suppliers and all facets of the building industry.

The primary goal of our association is to provide quality, affordable housing through community and government involvement, while promoting high standards of professionalism.



*You can tell more
about a person by
what he says about
others than you can
by what others say
about him.*

~ Leo Aikman

Joke of the month

*There were three fathers to be in a hospital waiting room,
waiting for their babies to be born.*

*The first nurse comes out and tells the first father,
"Congratulations you're the father of twins!"
He says, "Great! I am the manager for the Minnesota Twins."*

*The second nurse comes out and tells the second father,
"Congratulations you're the father of triplets!"
He says, "That's cool! I work for 3M."*

The third father opens the window and jumps out.

The third nurse comes out, and asks, "Where's the third father?"

One of the other fathers said, "Oh he jumped out the window."

The nurse asks, "Why?"

He replied, "He works for Seven Up!"

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President's Message



It's fair time here in Wausau. That means its August; how time flies! Did everyone have a good July? It was hot and dry, but nice if you had something going on outside. Talking about outside, a good time was had by all that came out to WABA picnic. Nice night, good food, good company and free beer and soda. All the kids had a great time with the squirt guns, thanks to Ray Bodenheimer. Wish all could have made the picnic, it was a great time.

Kristin Flamang has been working hard to get the membership list updated, we need you all to send us your company name, contact persons name, address, phone and all email addresses who would like to receive the monthly newsletter and any other info emails that we send out. So please get us that info as soon as you can. Kristin, Shirley and others will be calling to get updates and looking for new members in the next month, so to help them please email or call in your info.

Larry Meyer and his group is getting the Clay Shoot all together and it's time now for you to reserve you spot or if you have a group that would like to shoot get your reservations in as soon as you can, before it fills up. Knowing Larry he will have a lot of raffles and thing to give away. So if you like to shoot this is a must, Larry will make sure all will have a good time. See the reservation form in this newsletter.

Hey ... be sure to check out our new website at www.wausauareabuilders.com. Warren Pope has done wonders and it turned out really nice. Also check us out on facebook at Wausau area ba we have Kyle VanOrder and Jesse Maas have been working on that and they are really getting people to check us out. Stop by and LIKE us. If you have something you would like to see on either the website or facebook let us know, these guys are really good at what they are doing for WABA.

Looking for a few people to get together and discuss having a Fall Parade and Remodeling Show. We would like to have another refund raiser for WABA, so PLEASE volunteer to help make this happen next fall. Call or email me and we can get a meeting scheduled to discuss it.

Well I hope everyone has a great August and enjoy the rest of the summer, it won't be long and school will be starting. Do what you can with your kids before they return to school, they will thank you for it.

There is NO Dinner Meeting this month. Board meeting is August 14th @4:00pm WABA office.

— **Bob Marcell**

715-581-0980 or 715-581-0982
bob@marcells.net

NEW MEMBERS

Conklin Electric	Old School Painting, LLC
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Mid-State Tile Inc.	Small Space Big Style

THANK YOU FOR RENEWING

Main Street Homes	Foresight Custom Homes LLC
Stone Innovations	Ralph's Hardwood Floor Co. Inc.
Finnegan Construction	Stone Innovations
Keener Inc.	Wausau Buyers Guide
Main Street Homes, Inc.	Marcell's Specialities, Inc.



Isaac Dolan, Environmental/Civil Engineer, recently joined the REI Civil and Environmental Team of Wausau.

Mr. Dolan has experience in civil construction oversight, environmental cleanup, remediation system installation and maintenance, environmental site

assessments, industrial safety and environmental compliance, commercial site development, and construction estimation; and obtained a Bachelors Degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Wisconsin-Platteville in Platteville, WI. Mr. Dolan will be a valuable addition to the team.

REI's experienced team of civil and environmental engineers, land surveyors and environmental/safety consultants provides comprehensive services with practical solutions. Specific related land planning and surveying services include certified survey maps, boundary surveys, subdivision design, grading and drainage plans, and flood plain studies.

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AUGUST

2012

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1	2	3	4
5	6	Agenda Info is due POH Meeting - Discuss 2013 Budget Home Show - 3 pm Signage Review	8	9	10	11
12	13	14 BOARD MEETING - 4 pm	15	16	17	18
19	20 August Membership Renewals Due	21 ITEMS FOR NEWSLETTER DUE	22	23	24 Sporting Clay Shoot	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

SEPTEMBER

2012

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1
2	3 POH KICK-OFF MEETING	4 POH Meeting - 12:00 pm - Contract Review Home Show - 3 pm	5	6	7	8
9	10	11 Agenda Info is due	12	13	14	15
16	17	18 BOARD MEETING - 4 pm	19	20 Sept. Dinner Meeting Sept. Membership Renewals Due	21 ITEMS FOR NEWSLETTER DUE	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

OCTOBER

2012

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1 POH - Contracts Mailed - Home Show Price Increased	2 POH Committee Meeting - 12:00 pm	3	4	5	6
7	8	9 Board Agenda Items Due by 5 pm	10	11	12	13
14	15	16 BOARD MEETING - 4 pm	17	18 POH Kickoff Dinner Meeting - 6 pm	19	20 Oct. Membership Renewals Due
21	22	23	24 ITEMS FOR NEWSLETTER DUE	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			



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Cellcom launches its 4G LTE Network



Mobile broadband device debuts as first 4G product

Cellcom launched its 4G LTE network at the end of April in seven areas of Northeast and Central Wisconsin.

"The wireless landscape has changed dramatically over the past few years with data use skyrocketing in the form of applications, mobile web visits, streaming music and video downloads. The launch of 4G is an exciting development for Cellcom and our customers," said Pat Riordan, President and CEO of Cellcom. "4G LTE technology opens the door to give consumers what they want and need, faster data interactions."

Initially, Cellcom's 4G LTE services can be accessed using the Novatel MiFi 4510, a mobile hotspot product, which also launched in April. The MiFi allows you to connect up to five Wi-Fi-enabled devices to the Internet and can toggle to 3G when away from the 4G LTE network. The device is available for \$49.95 on promotion with a two-year agreement. This device can be used with either of Cellcom's Mobile Broadband Internet plans (3 GB of data for \$35 per month or 5 GB of data for \$60 per month).

The first phase of Cellcom's 4G LTE rollout includes cell sites in Green Bay, Sturgeon Bay, Appleton, Oshkosh, Wausau, and parts of Oconto and Marinette Counties. Cellcom customers also have access to 4G LTE in over 250 cities across the United States, including Madison, Milwaukee, Chicago and Minneapolis. Additional cell sites in Northeast and Central Wisconsin will light up throughout 2012 as the company continues its 4G rollout.

"As a company, we have been committed to ensuring that our customers in the small cities and rural towns throughout Wisconsin and Upper Michigan have access to the same technology that is found in major metropolitan areas throughout the country," said Riordan. "Our latest investment in bringing 4G LTE technology to our customers demonstrates this commitment."

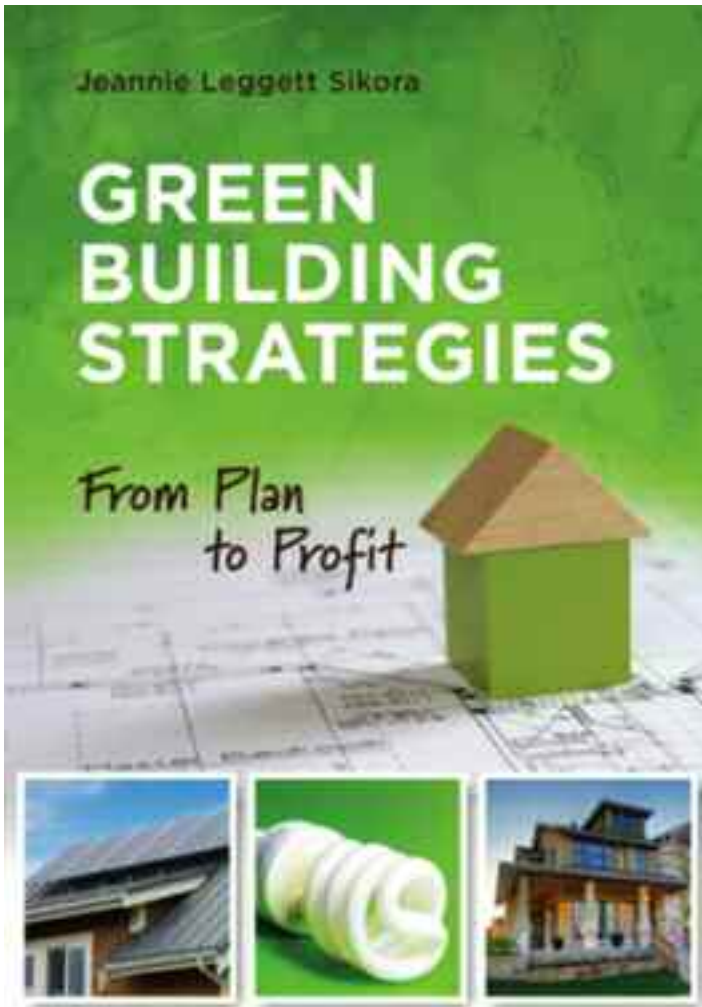
4G LTE technology improves data speeds, which is a major advantage in data-intensive activities such as streaming video and music, online gaming, and the rapidly growing number of activities with cloud-based applications. Customers can expect a data and Internet experience that is snappier and closer to real-time with download speeds averaging 5-12 mbps and upload speeds of 2-5 mbps, which is about 10 times faster than 3G.

Additional 4G LTE devices will be launched in coming months.

#####

Cellcom is a wireless company that provides nationwide service through nearly 80 retail and agent locations throughout Wisconsin and Michigan. Cellcom is respected for its long-standing reputation of providing extraordinary customer care, and its renowned network is customized to its rural markets and customers. As a subsidiary of Nsight, Cellcom is part of a family of companies offering complete telecommunications services. For more information visit www.cellcom.com.

New NAHB Publication Shows How to Build Green Without Breaking the Bank



July 24, 2012 - Keeping up with the rapidly changing field of green building can be daunting. BuilderBooks, the publishing arm of the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) recently released a new resource, *Green Building Strategies: From Plan to Profit* to help builders and industry professionals understand and apply cutting-edge building science to construct high performance homes, while reducing the impact on the environment.

Green Building Strategies is a succinct guide which takes readers step-by-step through the entire building process, from design through site development and construction, quality assurance, marketing and customer service. It provides the information needed to systematically create green projects cost-effectively.

Author Jeannie Leggett Sikora provides practical strategies for moving from conventional construction to green home building. Based on her interviews of experts, field observations, study of independent research and review of product data, she provides easy-to-implement green building options to help builders construct homes with a price tag both they and their customers can afford.

"The author condenses comprehensive guidance on the process of building green into an easy-to-use resource," said NAHB Chairman Barry Rutenberg, a home builder from Gainesville, Fla. "This is a must-read for anyone looking to learn more about green home building."

Green Building Strategies provides helpful illustrations, photos and figures throughout the book. It also includes a glossary and list of recommended websites for green building resources.

Green Building Strategies: From Plan to Profit is available for purchase at <http://www.builderbooks.com/> or by calling 800-223-2665. Soft-cover/182 pages, \$44.95 retail, \$39.95 NAHB member, ISBN 978-0-86718-679-6.

[Editor's Note: Editors who are interested in receiving a complimentary copy of *Green Building Strategies: From Plan to Profit* to review for their publications should contact Patricia Potts at 202-266-8224 or ppotts@nahb.org].

DID YOU KNOW?

Residential Construction Fall Protection

Assistant Secretary for Occupational Safety and Health
Washington, D.C. 20210
February 15, 2012

MEMORANDUM FOR: OSHA REGIONAL ADMINISTRATORS
FROM: DAVID MICHAELS, PhD, MPH
SUBJECT: Residential Construction Fall Protection

In my September 22, 2011 memorandum, I provided general policy guidance for enforcement of the residential fall protection directive (Compliance Guidance for Residential Construction, STD 03-11-002, effective June 16, 2011). The memo established a 6-month period ending March 15, 2012 during which OSHA would place a high priority on compliance assistance related to residential fall protection. It also provided instructions applicable to inspections, citations, penalties, and a 30-day correction period for residential construction employers found to be following the old directive (STD 03-00-001). ***A copy of that memo is below.***

OSHA's efforts to assist the residential construction industry as it transitions to the new fall protection requirements are working well. Our Compliance Assistance Specialists (CASs) are responding promptly to requests related to residential fall protection. Our Compliance Safety and Health Officers (CSHOs) and Area Directors are demonstrating to the industry that OSHA is taking a common-sense approach when enforcing the new requirements.

Accordingly, I have decided that OSHA will continue the measures we have been taking and extend the transitional phase an additional 6 months. All policy and instructions contained in the September 22, 2011 memorandum will continue in effect until September 15, 2012.

Please share this information with the State Plans and On-site Consultation Projects in your Region, and ensure that all Area Offices follow this continued temporary policy.

Original Memo

U.S. Department of Labor
Assistant Secretary for Occupational Safety and Health
Washington, D.C. 20210
September 22, 2011

MEMORANDUM FOR: OSHA REGIONAL ADMINISTRATORS
FROM: DAVID MICHAELS, PhD, MPH
SUBJECT: Residential Construction Fall Protection

Effective immediately and until March 15, 2012, the following general policy guidance is to be followed for enforcement of the new residential fall protection directive (Compliance Guidance for Residential Construction, STD 03-11-002) and for compliance assistance related to that directive. Please share this information with the State Plans and On-site Consultation Projects in your region, and ensure that all Area Offices follow this temporary policy.

1) OSHA will make it a priority for our Compliance Assistance Specialists (CASs) to provide assistance to the residential construction industry. Please instruct the Area Offices that residential fall protection requests are to be the CAS's highest priority. In addition, please inform the State On-site Consultation Projects that, from September 16, 2011 through March 15, 2012, excluding imminent danger situations, requests from residential construction businesses should be their highest priority for receiving an on-site visit.

2) During inspections of employers engaged in residential construction who are not complying with the new residential fall protection directive, but are following the old directive (Plain Language Revision of OSHA Instruction STD 3.1, Interim Fall Protection Compliance Guidelines for Residential Construction, STD 03-00-001), the Regional Administrators and Area Directors will take the following actions:

Area Directors will allow an additional good faith reduction in penalties of up to 10% for employers engaged in residential construction. In addition to the safety and health management system good faith determination in Chapter 6 of the Field Operations Manual, the Area Director shall consider examples of attempting to comply in good faith to include: requesting and scheduling an On-site Consultation visit, ordering protective fall equipment for its employees, or performing a documented evaluation of feasible means of abatement. This good faith reduction does not apply in cases of a fatality, catastrophe, or serious injury resulting from a fall during residential construction activities.

Area Directors will allow residential construction employers at least 30 days to correct fall protection violations identified under the new residential fall protection directive. During that time, if such employers are not in compliance at that site or another site, no additional citations or repeat citations shall be issued. This policy does not apply in cases of a fatality, catastrophe, or serious injury resulting from a fall during residential construction activities.

3) All proposed citations under this enforcement policy shall be submitted to the OSHA Regional Office to ensure consistency and clarity. For cases where the Regional Office needs interpretative assistance in its review, it shall consult with the National Office Directorate of Construction.

All of the measures described in this policy apply only to employers that are, at a minimum, following the old directive (STD 03-00-001). If the employer is not complying with either the new directive or the old directive, the Area Director shall issue appropriate citations.

As a resource, an OSHApedia page with examples of feasible fall protection for various scenarios can be accessed at <http://oshapedia.osha.gov/mediawiki/index.php/DOC> or by going to the DOC section from the OSHApedia home page.

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SPORTING CLAY SHOOT

FRIDAY, AUGUST 24

WAUSAU SKEET & TRAP CLUB, BROKAW

Registration 8:00 am

Shotgun Start 9:00 am (Rain or Shine)

\$65 per shooter - \$325 per team

5 person teams are NOT necessary to participate

REGISTRATION FEE INCLUDES:

17 Sporting Clay Shooting Stations • Lunch and Refreshments

Raffles will be available for an additional cost.

Five Shooters per Team / 100 Rounds per Shooter

Side Events Available: Rabbit Station, 5-Stand and Annie Oakley Shoot

6 (six) boxes of #7 1/2 or smaller shells are recommended

(Boxes of shells will be available to purchase at the Gun Club)

Personal Four-wheeler transportation is allowed.

EYE AND EAR PROTECTION REQUIRED - NO EXCEPTIONS!

Business Name: _____ Phone: _____

Shooter #1 _____ Phone: _____

Shooter #2 _____ Phone: _____

Shooter #3 _____ Phone: _____

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Shooter #5 _____ Phone: _____

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or email larry@meyerconstruction.com



REP. VOS ON LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Recently leaders from a number of business groups had an opportunity to speak with current Joint Finance Committee Co-Chair and likely next Assembly Speaker Representative Robin Vos (R-Burlington).

Vos is bullish on his caucus' chances in the 2012 general elections, stating that they are "a sure thing" to be in the majority during the 2013-2014 session and for a long time to come. Vos pointed to the new legislative maps and the quality of their current incumbents running for re-election and those that have been recruited to take on democrat incumbents.

As far as the next state budget goes, Vos stated legislative leaders were already talking with Governor Walker about what will go into the next budget. The thought here is that if they work together before introduction, fewer changes will be needed once the full budget is introduced in early 2013.

Committee structure and the number of committees in the state assembly was also something Vos touched on. In the past, the assembly has had a number of committees. Vos stated that they may be looking at consolidating committees to around 12-15 committees that will have more focus than in the past.

Three other major policy items were singled out by Vos: more regulatory reforms, review of the tax policy, and reviewing "safety net" programs offered by the state (Badger Care, Senior Care).

On the topic of taxes, WBA staff professionals will be meeting with Rep. Vos in the near future to discuss taxes and offer the WBA Tax Subcommittee report for some items to consider.

STATE SENATE FLIPS TO DEMS

Senator Van Wanggaard (R-Racine) announced recently that he would not challenge the results of his June 5 recall election and subsequent recount. Wanggaard's decision will pave the way for former Senator John Lehman (D-Racine) to again be seated as the state senator from the 21st Senate District.

In the press release announcing he would not pursue any legal challenge to the election results Wanggaard said he would be a candidate for the seat in 2014 which will have a radically different political tilt due to redistricting.

On July 17th the State Senate reconvened to transfer the majority from the republicans to the democrats.

2012 STATE SENATE ELECTION OUTLOOK

All eyes will again be on the state senate election heading into the fall of 2012. The GOP needs to take at least one seat currently occupied by a democrat to take back the majority. Enclosed is a brief summary of the most hotly contested state senate seats.

The 12th Senate District is an open seat with the retirement of one term State Senator Jim Holprein (D-Conover). The democrats will have to wait to see who comes out of a two person primary on August 14 to see who will take on current State Representative Tom Tiffany (R-Rhineland).

Because of the failure by the democrats to recruit a top tier candidate and the strength of Rep. Tom Tiffany (both in name identification in the district and fundraising ability) this is a seat that should be a strong opportunity for the GOP to retake the majority.

Up until late summer 2011 the 18th Senate District (think Oshkosh to Fond du Lac and the rural area west of both cities) had been considered safe GOP territory. With the successful recall election of Senator Jessica King (D-Oshkosh) and the fact that the City of Oshkosh has trended away from the GOP in recent years, this is still a GOP seat but not a slam dunk like it used to be.

Fond du Lac City Council member Rick Gudex is challenging King for this seat in the fall. Gudex is well known in the Fond du Lac area and is working almost exclusively in the Oshkosh area to help improve his standing in that important area of the state senate district.

I would rate this seat as a toss-up/slight GOP advantage going into the fall. I believe the 12th senate district mentioned above may be a lost cause for the democrats, if so they would likely focus a huge amount of time, money and effort to help keep King in office.

Finally, the 30th Senate District is again on the radar screen this fall for both political parties. There is a two way GOP primary for the right to move on and challenge State Senator Dave Hansen (D-Green Bay).

If John Macco advances from the GOP primary, which most believe he will, look for this seat to also be in play this fall.

The GOP and outside groups are again intrigued with the prospect of beating Senator Hansen after Governor Walker received 60% of the vote in the recent recall election. Look for the same groups to make the charge that Hansen has “gone Madison” and is no longer in touch with the district.

FROM NAHB: MORE THAN 750 BUILDERS CALL ON CONGRESS TO MAKE HOUSING AND HOMEOWNERSHIP A NATIONAL PRIORITY

More than 750 home builders trekked to Capitol Hill on June 6th to call on Congress to make housing and homeownership a national priority and to take concrete steps to get housing back on track in order to create jobs and keep the economy moving forward.

“Though we are seeing some hopeful signs of recovery in many markets throughout the nation, our industry still faces stiff headwinds,” said NAHB Chairman Barry Rutenberg, a home builder from Gainesville, Fla.

Persistently tight lending standards for home builders and home buyers, uncertainty regarding the future of the housing finance system, ongoing threats to vital housing tax incentives, and overly burdensome regulations are hampering a housing recovery and keeping countless home building firms from constructing viable projects and hiring new workers, he added.

In more than 250 individual meetings with their representatives and senators, builders called on their lawmakers to:

- Support legislation to restore the flow of credit for new housing production. NAHB is urging the House Financial Services Committee to consider H.R. 1755, the Home Construction Lending Regulatory Improvement Act. Sponsored by Reps. Gary Miller (R-Calif.) and Brad Miller (D-N.C.), the measure currently has 96 co-sponsors and would remove barriers to lending while preserving the regulators’ ability to assure the safety and the soundness of the financial institutions they oversee. NAHB is seeking cosponsors for similar legislation in the Senate, S. 2078, the Home Building Lending Improvement Act, sponsored by Sens. Bob Menendez (D-N.J.) and Johnny Isakson (R-Ga.).
- Pass comprehensive legislation to reform housing government sponsored enterprises Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac and the Federal Home Loan Banks that provides a federal backstop to ensure a reliable and adequate flow of affordable housing credit in all economic and financial conditions.
- Preserve current housing tax incentives, including the mortgage interest deduction and Low Income Housing Tax Credit, as the debate on tax reform moves ahead.
- Support legislation to make much-needed improvements to the Environmental Protection Agency’s Lead: Repair, Renovation and Painting (LRRP) rule. Sponsored by Sen. James Inhofe (R-Okla.), the Lead Exposure Reduction Amendments Act of 2012 (S. 2148) would offer several reforms to EPA enforcement of the lead paint rule, including reinstating the opt-out provision to allow home owners without small children or pregnant women residing in them to decide whether to require LRRP compliance.
- Cosponsor House and Senate bills that would reduce the overreach of federal power under the Clean Water Act. House bill H.R. 4965, the Preserve the Waters of the United States Act, and its identically named Senate companion measure (S. 2245), would prevent the EPA and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers from finalizing or implementing their draft guidance to expand the reach of the Clean Water Act to include virtually every ditch, pond and seasonal runoff ditch in the nation.

“In this pivotal election year, it is imperative to ensure that presidential and congressional candidates on both sides of the political aisle understand the importance of housing and homeownership,” said Rutenberg. “Today, builders from across the land reiterated this message to their legislators and reminded them that there can be no economic recovery without a housing recovery.”

continued on next page

SIGN UP TO ATTEND THE 2012 GLORIA KIRKING MEMORIAL GOLF OUTING/BUILD-PAC FUNDRAISER

We will again be holding the Gloria Kirking Memorial Golf Outing/BUILD-PAC Fundraiser on Thursday, September 20, 2012 at the Wild Rock Golf Course in Wisconsin Dells.



Brad Boycks
WBA Director of Government and Political Affairs
Wisconsin Builders Association@bboycks@wisbuild.org
(608) 242-5151 ext.16
Visit our web site: www.wisbuild.org

(This is a monthly report from the Wisconsin Builders Association, our "political arm" at the state Capitol in Madison. Each month, the Monday Morning Review will highlight the going's on under the Capitol Dome with an eye toward what matters to the housing industry.)

Opportunity Knocks for Home Buyers

Homeownership is an important part of the American way of life, and there may never be a better time to buy than today.



National Association of Home Builders

With the economic uncertainty of the past few years, you may be wondering, **Is now a good time to buy a home?**

The answer is easy: **Yes.**

It's a very good time to purchase a home. There are many opportunities in today's market including affordable prices, low mortgage rates and great new homes.

And despite the housing downturn, home owners still place high value on owning a home, and recommend homeownership to others.

According to a January, 2012, poll*:

- 96 percent of home owners are happy with their decision to own.
- 79 percent of home owners would advise a family member or close friend just starting out to buy a home.
- 74 percent said that despite the ups and downs in the housing market, owning a home is the best long-term investment they can make.

Great Selection

An excellent selection of homes on the market makes today a very good time to buy. A plentiful inventory provides a great choice of homes, and many builders have brand new homes that are "move-in ready."

Additionally, many owners of existing homes who postponed trading up or downsizing due to market conditions are now ready to sell. And as employment improves, the number of relocations will increase, bringing more homes into the market.

Attractive Pricing

Homes in many markets are more affordable now. Prices in some areas have moderated significantly, especially in major markets where they increased the most during the housing boom that occurred in many parts of the country.

* Survey of 1,500 likely voters conducted on Jan. 2-5, 2012, on behalf of the National Association of Home Builders by Public Opinion Strategies in Alexandria, Va., and Lake Research Partners in Washington, D.C.



How Interest Rates Affect Mortgage Payments

Monthly Principal and Interest on a 30-Year,
Fixed-Rate \$150,000 Mortgage

Interest Rate	Monthly Principal and Interest
3.5%	\$673.57
4.0%	\$716.12
4.5%	\$760.03
5.0%	\$805.23
5.5%	\$851.68
6.0%	\$899.33
6.5%	\$948.10
7.0%	\$997.95

Low Interest Rates

Like inventory and pricing, mortgage interest rates are still at very favorable levels, but rates are sensitive to market forces and can change quickly. Even a slight rate increase can push monthly payments to the point that a buyer might miss out on their first choice for a new home.

Prospective home buyers should be aware that lenders are looking more closely at borrowers today than in recent years. To ensure that the process goes smoothly, buyers should consider pre-qualifying for a mortgage and having financing in place before shopping for a new home. Buyers also may find that some home builders have arranged favorable financing for their customers or offer financial incentives.

Greener and Better

With energy costs near the top of consumer concerns, it's good to know that new homes can be more energy efficient than ever. Innovative materials and construction techniques mean that today's new homes are built to be much more energy efficient than homes constructed a generation ago. Not only are new homes more resource-efficient and environmentally friendly, they also can be more affordable to operate.

Designed with Buyers in Mind

Designed to accommodate today's busy lifestyles, new homes feature open floorplans, flexible spaces such as home offices, improved safety features, low-maintenance materials and other amenities that make them more appealing than ever before.

New homes are also wired to safely accommodate usage of modern appliances and technology components such as high-definition televisions and sophisticated lighting, audio and security systems.

And in many areas, prospective home buyers who wish to live in age-qualified communities for those 55 and older will find a large selection of homes tailored to the evolving lifestyles of the baby boom generation with features such as wider doorways and curbless showers.

Home owners consider homeownership and retirement savings to be their best investments and those most likely to pay off the most for them and their families.



Benefits for Buyers

Homeownership also provides important benefits to owners.

Tax Benefits: For Home Owners Only

Unique tax benefits that apply only to housing help lower the cost of homeownership. Both mortgage interest and property taxes are deductible. Moreover, for married couples, profits of up to \$500,000 on the sale of a principal residence (\$250,000 for single taxpayers) are excluded from tax on capital gains.

The Advantage of Leveraging

Leveraging is another advantage of homeownership. A buyer can purchase a home and receive the full benefit of homeownership with a cash downpayment that is only a fraction of the total purchase price. This is called leveraging, and it makes the rate of return on a home purchase greater than on other purchases with the same value, such as stocks, where the buyer must put up the entire price.

Building Personal Resources

For most Americans, homeownership is a primary source of net worth and an important step in accumulating personal financial assets

over the long term. Although property values have declined in many markets, Americans currently have a total of more than \$6 trillion in equity in their homes, and for most families, home equity represents the largest share of net worth.

In fact, the January 2012 poll respondents said that they consider homeownership and retirement savings to be their best investments and those most likely to pay off the most for them and their families.

There Really is No Place Like Home

Although there are many positive financial aspects to homeownership, a home cannot be valued in monetary terms alone. Not only can homeownership be a steppingstone to greater financial well-being, it provides a permanent place to call home and great personal satisfaction.

Academic research also shows that homeownership provides a wide range of social benefits and strengthens the nation's people and its communities

Homeownership is truly a cornerstone of the American way of life.

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