

## Hill Visits 5/15/14

On May 15th the Alaska delegation attending the annual meetings in Washington D.C. met with our elected officials to lobby key issues on your behalf. 16 members of our Association were present for these meetings. In contrast to recent years when passing back and forth around the capitol building to get to meetings on the house and senate sides meant dodging construction zones and slogging through the hot and humid air, this year was actually a pleasant experience. Staff members from both Senator Begich's office and Congressman Young's office took time to get us through security to access the trains that the senators and congressman use to get back and forth to the capitol building. Congressman Young's staffer actually took the group up into the capitol for an impromptu tour.

Most of our time at Senator Begich's office was spent with staff, as the Senate was in the middle of voting. The Senator did stop in to say hello in between votes. Our primary issues dealt with preserving the mission and purpose of FHA, reforming the secondary market (Fannie and Freddie) to provide certainty in the U.S. housing market, and to preserve real estate related tax policies. The Senator was clearly on board with all our positions here.

As congress was in recess we were not able to meet with Congressman Young. His staff person for real estate matters stated that the Congressman was on our side on these issues and that he was opposed to legislation titled the PATH Act. This bill would increase the FHA down payment and severely restrict access to the lending program by as much as 40%. We will confirm the Congressman's position on these issues in a future meeting.

While Senator Murkowski was also tied up in floor votes, two of her staff met with us. While our job is to make sure that our major issues are covered we are often led in other directions as the elected officials and staff take advantage of the opportunity to feel out their constituents on other issues they are concerned with. In this case the topic was health care. Most of the members around the state voiced the same concerns regarding rising cost and uncertainty about the future of the health industry. Staff left this meeting with the clear knowledge that the rising cost of health care is having a negative affect on the housing market in that some are afraid to commit to a purchase and some are buying in a much lower range than they currently qualify for due to the certainty that health care costs will continue their dramatic increase. After the meeting staff took us to the capitol steps where Senator Murkowski came out to meet with us between votes. We were able to have a brief discussion on our issues and it appears, for the most part, that she agrees with us on the issues.

For more information on the major issues discussed here please log onto [Realtor.com](http://Realtor.com).