

Defeating Rent Control Legislation in Washington State

Case Study Partnership for Affordable Housing

CHALLENGE

Assemble an influential and effective strategic and educational campaign to convince both Washingtonians and statewide elected officials that rent control/stabilization is not the solution to the housing crisis.



BACKGROUND

The 2024 legislative session in Washington was a critical period for the Partnership for Affordable Housing (PAH). Faced with the introduction of two significant “rent stabilization” bills (with an initial 5% proposed cap), HB 2114 and SB 5961, PAH created a robust strategy to oppose these measures. Dedicated to increasing housing affordability and availability, PAH strongly opposed these bills, knowing (armed with marketing-data) they would reduce investment in the state and make housing more expensive in the long term.

SOLUTIONS

Pre-Legislative Session

Public Education: Utilizing digital marketing and advertising channels, PAH aimed to raise awareness about the adverse effects of rent control policies. This phase focused on educating the public about the long-term consequences such policies would have on the housing market and overall economy.

During the pre-legislative session campaign with REAL Strategies, PAH’s digital marketing efforts focused on the three top local and national websites, realizing nearly 1.9 million digital impressions, 2,900 ad clicks to the PAH website, and a successful click through rate (CTR) of 0.15% in a five-week span.

Legislative Session Mobilization

Constituency Mobilization: As the legislative session began, PAH targeted key legislative districts to mobilize constituencies with patch-through calls (spanning eight days, with 884 successful patches to State Representatives and 330 to State Senators); direct text messaging (yielding an average delivery rate of 89% and a total of 236 actions on the PAH Voter Voice page), and an online email campaign that allowed residents to send a letter directly to their legislators.

Legislative Advocacy: Constituents were encouraged to personally advocate against the rent stabilization bills, emphasizing the negative impacts these policies would have.

RESULTS

Successful defeat of both HB 2114 & SB 5961:

HB 2114/ESHB 2114: Despite passing through the House, both bills were ultimately defeated in the Senate Ways & Means Committee, thanks to opposition from Senators Mark Mullet and Kevin Van De Wege.

SB 5961: This bill did not secure majority support in the Senate Housing Committee and was voted down by a narrow margin, with a critical opposition vote from Senator Annette Cleveland.

Key Takeaways

The combination of educational campaigns and grassroots advocacy orchestrated by PAH and coordinated by REAL Strategies was instrumental in achieving these results. Early education and awareness efforts laid the groundwork, while strategic mobilization during the legislative session ensured continuous pressure and engagement with legislators.

By leveraging a mix of digital outreach, direct advocacy, and data-driven strategies, PAH effectively demonstrated the detrimental effects of rent control policies and mobilized sufficient opposition to defeat the proposed legislation.