



## **Prince George's County (MD) Association Wins Compromise on Real Estate Recordation Tax With Multi-Media Campaign – February 2013**

Early in 2012, when the Prince George's County Council (MD) proposed easing its budget woes by increasing the real estate recordation tax – for the second year in row – the local REALTOR® association took action. When attempts to negotiate a fairer solution didn't work out, it turned to the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® newly minted REALTOR® Party for help.

"By that time, we only had a few short weeks before the Council vote," remembers Mike Graziano, Government Affairs Director of the 2,800-member Prince George's County Association of REALTORS® (PGCAR.) In a conference call with NAR staff and their political consultants, he was perplexed to hear the experts advising a "robo-call" campaign. "I had been thinking more along the lines of a postcard mailing," he admits, "I mean, don't people hang up on automated calls?" Not so, apparently. "They clearly knew what they were talking about."

NAR determined the number of households that should be targeted, and had Graziano apply for an Issues Mobilization Grant of about \$11,000 to cover the cost of producing and implementing the campaign. "The team at NAR was fantastic. They knew just the right questions to ask me, to put together the most effective script for the calls, and I was able to leave the rest up to their expertise. They wrote the script, chose the voice, and picked the day and even the time of day the calls would be deployed. And they worked fast!" The calls featured a "pass-through" function, whereby a recipient could opt to be transferred directly to his or her Council member's office to register an opinion.

And register they did. When Graziano attended the May County Council meeting to sit in on the vote, he learned just how effective robo-calls can be. "Council members' staffers told me their phones had been ringing off the hook. Members were asking me to make it stop!" Earlier in the week, thanks to its access to NAR's mass-email platform, PGCAR had mounted a massive electronic letter-writing campaign. Full-page ads funded by the Maryland Association of REALTORS® had run in the *Prince George's County Gazette*, the free local weekly paper, which had also carried PGCAR's letters to the editor.

The carefully timed multi-media campaign had applied the necessary pressure: the Council chairperson brokered a compromise that would increase the real estate recordation tax – but only by *half* the rate of the originally proposed increase. The last-minute deal was unanimously approved, and the new recordation tax rate of \$2.75 per \$500 of home value took effect in July 2012.

Though the recordation tax increase was not struck altogether, PGCAR is pleased that it was able to force a compromise that significantly reduced the proposed increase – and is proud of its members for making themselves heard. The political stature gained by this effort will be invaluable, moving forward. At a Legislative Breakfast PGCAR hosted in November, a full six months after the vote, the vice-chair of the County Council made a pointed comment in his remarks about the power of the real estate industry. "They learned something from that campaign that they won't soon forget..." says Graziano.



*To learn more about how the REALTORS<sup>®</sup> of Prince George's County limited the recordation tax, contact Michael Graziano, Director of Government Affairs, Prince George's County Association of REALTORS<sup>®</sup>, at 301.306.7900 or [mikeg@pgcar.com](mailto:mikeg@pgcar.com).*