



# Governor, mayors urge voters to approve housing bond on November ballot

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By Christine Dunn Journal Staff Writer

PROVIDENCE - Governor Raimondo joined housing advocates downtown Thursday afternoon to boost the Yes on 7 campaign in support of the \$50-million Housing Opportunity bond that will be Question 7 on the Nov. 8 ballot.

The mayors of Providence, Pawtucket and Central Falls, Jorge Elorza, Donald Grebien and James Diossa, were also on hand for the event, held at the Gately Building, a historic building at 2 Bayley St. that was renovated with previously-approved housing bond money. The space now includes a commercial kitchen, community space, and 13 affordable apartments for low-income residents.

Raimondo said she's not in love with the term affordable housing, because so many residents of affordable units are regular working people.

Tony Maione of the United Way of Rhode Island cautioned against buying into antiquated notions of what affordable housing is. If you have a vision in your mind of a high-rise, get it out of there, he said.

We're preaching to our choir here, Grebien said, but we need to get the message out to the community.

"We saw this week that every vote matters," Barbara Fields, executive director of Rhode Island Housing, said. "This is the group that's going to get it done. Right?"

Housing is an everybody issue, Raimondo told the crowd. Everybody wins when we have more housing in Rhode Island. She added that the bond is a smart way to leverage private capital and attract outside investment to Rhode Island. Everyone in our state should have a roof over their heads, Raimondo added. It's not only the right thing to do; it's also a smart investment in the future of our state and economy.

Building Homes Rhode Island has been the primary source of state funding for affordable housing. The program was established by the state's Housing Resources Commission to distribute two previously approved affordable housing bonds; \$50 million was approved by voters in 2006 and \$25 million was approved in 2012. In addition to creating close to 2,000 affordable homes, the bond money helped keep many construction workers in Rhode Island employed during the worst years of the Great Recession.

In addition to Raimondo, Fields, Maione and Grebien, speakers at the campaign kick-off included emcee Linda Weisinger, executive director of Pawtucket Central Falls Development; Marine Corps veteran Sam Lubbers; Jess Rye, co-executive director of Farm Fresh Rhode Island's Harvest Kitchen Program, which is located at the Gately Building; and Albert Valliere, vice president and chairman, Nation Wide Construction.