



## WISCONSIN REALTORS® ASSOCIATION

### ADVOCACY FUND

## BACKGROUND

In February 2016, the Wisconsin Legislature passed sweeping changes to Wisconsin campaign finance laws. These changes greatly increased contribution limits and expanded contribution sources to include corporate funds. The WRA also receives an increasing number of requests for financial support toward other lobbying and advocacy projects. In August 2016, the WRA board of directors decided the WRA needed a new, long-term, effective fundraising response to maintain our successful legislative advocacy efforts and political involvement. In May 2017, the board approved the first dues increase in six years to create a new “advocacy fund” designed to preserve and enhance our legislative successes in light of the new increased fundraising opportunities.

## QUESTION

**How will the new Advocacy Fund be funded?**

## ANSWER

- The WRA board approved a \$35 dues increase to fund the new Advocacy Fund at its May 5 meeting.
- The \$35 dues increase will apply to all WRA members and affiliated members, and will go into effect starting with the 2018 dues billing.
- The \$35 will be transferred to the new Advocacy Fund as a contribution from each WRA member.
- The new Advocacy Fund is a Section 527 political organization sponsored by the WRA that engages in state and local political activities as allowed for under Wisconsin law and the Internal Revenue Code.

**What will the new Advocacy Fund be used for?**

- The new Advocacy Fund will provide the WRA with additional financial resources necessary to maximize our ability to advocate effectively on legislative, legal and regulatory issues through new corporate fundraising and expanded use of existing advocacy tools including independent expenditures.
- The funds will not be used for staff salaries or any other administrative costs.

## QUESTION

## ANSWER

**Why is the new Advocacy Fund necessary at this time?**

- In 2016, Wisconsin lawmakers significantly changed Wisconsin campaign finance laws by, among other things, doubling the contribution limits to candidates for state and local office and legalizing corporate political contributions for the first time in 100 years.
- The WRA board determined it was necessary to raise more money to advocate for our issues under the new laws.

**Why did the WRA board increase dues to fund this new program?**

- After considering several options, the WRA board chose to increase dues to fund the program because the entire membership will benefit from these advocacy efforts.

**How will the new Advocacy Fund differ from RPAC?**

- The REALTORS® Political Action Committee (RPAC) is a voluntary contribution to provide financial support directly to candidates who support REALTOR® issues.
- Generally, about 40 percent of WRA members contribute to RPAC even though 100 percent of our members benefit from these contributions.
- The new Advocacy Fund is more flexible and will be used for a variety of advocacy expenditures for candidates who support our issues, and for issue campaigns to educate and engage the public about key REALTOR® issues.

**With the \$35 dues increase going into effect this fall, will the WRA still raise money through RPAC?**

- Yes.
- The WRA will still raise money through RPAC and the Direct Giver program so we can continue our efforts to financially support candidates who support our issues.

**Are there other state REALTOR® associations that have a similar advocacy program?**

- Yes.
- California, Oregon and Washington are examples of other state REALTOR® associations that have a similar advocacy fund.
- Those assessments range in amount from \$35/member to \$50/member.

**What if a member doesn't want to give to the Wisconsin REALTORS® Advocacy Fund (WRAF)? Do these members have another option?**

- Yes.
- Members who don't want to give to the Wisconsin REALTORS® Advocacy Fund can notify the WRA, in writing, that their \$35 go instead to the Wisconsin Homeowners Alliance (WHA) to support its grassroots lobbying and other policy efforts on behalf of Wisconsin property owners.

