

What's new with HOME Line?

JANUARY THROUGH MARCH 2011

HOME Line wrote **How to Be the Smartest Renter on Your Block** to help renters through the process of finding, getting, and maintaining rental housing. Reflecting upon the real-life concerns we hear through thousands of questions on our tenant hotline, this book gives advice on the best ways to handle and avoid the most common rental problems. More information is available at homelinemn.org/book.

Organizing

- Organizers played an instrumental role in the return of five low-income buildings in Willmar and Alexandria to the Rural Development Program that keeps the rents affordable for the low-income families who need this housing. The owners had illegally left the Rural Development program jeopardizing the low-income tenants living there. HOME Line organized the tenants and worked with the Housing Preservation Project, resulting in 131 units of affordable housing preserved under a new non-profit owner who will keep the buildings affordable.
- Organizers assisted tenants via organizing, doorknocking, or other advocacy efforts in 6 HUD subsidized buildings, 1 market rate building, and 2 USDA Rural Development complexes representing 472 units of affordable and lower rent housing.

Policy Advocacy

- HOME Line is fighting proposals in the Minnesota Legislature to make dramatic cuts to the Renters Credit. The Senate is proposing to cut the tax credit to low and middle income renters by 27%. The House is proposing a 45% cut. To fight this measure, HOME Line generated over 100 calls to the Governor, asking him to support the Renters Credit (which he has), has publicly recognized every legislator who has spoken in favor of the Renters Credit, and has given over 70 local newspapers information on how a Renters' Credit cut would impact their communities. HOME Line staff and volunteers have also testified at 3 legislative hearings regarding the Renters Credit.
- HOME Line's Public Policy Blog, <http://homelinemn.org/blog/>, provides timely state and federal policy updates to housing advocates and other interested parties. The blog also includes common sense language to describe (often confusing) housing law and programs. In the first quarter of 2011, there were 5,864 page-views of the blog.

Tenant Hotline

- The top four caller issues were: repairs, evictions, security deposits and foreclosures. Foreclosures continue to affect renters, accounting for over 8.6% of all calls.
- These numbers continue to show the growing use of technology to help tenants get information:
 - *6,432 people visited our website this quarter. 3,486 accessed legal forms.
 - *232 callers this quarter found our services from the website.
 - *195 people used email to receive tenant landlord advice from a HOME Line attorney.