

# NEWS RELEASE

## REALTOR® Association of Pioneer Valley

221 Industry Avenue · Springfield, MA 01104  
Tel: 413-785-1328 · Toll-Free: 877-854-6978 · Fax: 413-731-7125  
[www.rapv.com](http://www.rapv.com)

Christine Roukey, PCM in Digital Marketing  
Marketing & Communications Director  
[christine@rapv.com](mailto:christine@rapv.com)



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## REALTOR® Association of Pioneer Valley Joins Thousands of REALTORS® in Nation's Capital to Advocate Policy Issues Affecting Homeownership, Commercial Real Estate

Springfield, Mass. June 1, 2018 – More than 9,000 REALTORS® gathered in Washington, D.C. the week of May 14, 2018, during the 2018 REALTOR® Legislative Meetings & Trade Expo, to advocate for crucial real estate issues on behalf of current and future home and property owners across the country.

REALTOR® Association of Pioneer Valley (RAPV) joined fellow REALTORS® from throughout the U.S. to attend meetings and informational sessions, as well as meet with regulatory agency staff and lawmakers on Capitol Hill to discuss and advocate real estate issues affecting the real estate industry, and their businesses, communities and clients.

Members of the National Association of REALTORS® focused on several significant issues affecting the industry during the legislative-focused meetings, including fair housing, flood insurance and internet neutrality.

“REALTORS® are the leading advocates for homeownership and commercial real estate, which is why it is so critical that we connect with lawmakers and ensure they understand the issues facing the real estate industry and their constituents – of which many are home and property owners,” said Edward Alford, President of RAPV. “Supporting home and property owners through smart legislation and regulatory initiatives is essential to advancing our nation’s economy, as well as our communities, so REALTORS® are continuing the fight to keep Congress’s attention on the issues that impact real estate most,” he added.

Additional issues highlighted with legislative leaders included the economic effects on the industry from a lower unemployment rate, increased consumer confidence regarding wage and income gains, tight inventory with increasing median home prices and not enough new construction. Home ownership is the foundation of wealth building by the middle class in this country and influences the flow of goods, services and income for



Front L-R: David Wluka, Kathleen Yorkis, Edward Alford, Anne Meczywor, Rep. Richard Neal (D-Mass.), Kelly Bowman, Paul Yorkis, Russ Sabadosa, Rick Sawicki  
Back L-R: Brian Sears, Peter West, Kevin Sears, Ben Scranton, Dawn Henry

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millions of Americans. While in Washington, RAPV REALTORS® met with Rep. Richard Neal (D-Mass.) and the offices of Sen. Edward Markey (D-Mass.) and Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) on Capitol Hill to discuss and advocate for public policy decisions affecting Americans' ability to own, buy, rent and sell residential and commercial real estate.

When speaking with Rep. Richard Neal (D-Mass.), Alford and his fellow REALTORS® acknowledged the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Fair Housing Act and urged Congress to adopt sexual orientation and gender identity as protected classes under the Fair Housing Act, bringing it in line with NAR's strict Code of Ethics. Additionally, REALTORS® advocated for strong net neutrality protections; fought to extend and reform the National Flood Insurance Program; and urged Congress to index homeownership deductions for future inflation and permanently extend the tax exclusion on mortgage debt forgiveness.



*Foreground L-R: Rep. Richard Neal (D-Mass.), David Wluka, Russ Sabadosa, Edward Alford*

*Background L-R: Kevin Sears, Anne Meczywor, Dawn Henry, Rick Sawicki, Kathleen Yorkis*

“REALTORS® are proud to lead the way toward greater equality in housing opportunities and are committed to furthering policies that support sustainable and inclusive communities without discrimination,” said Alford.

REALTOR® participants from the Pioneer Valley included Edward Alford, President of RAPV (South Hadley); Kelly Bowman, President-Elect (Sunderland); Corinne Fitzgerald (Northfield); Dawn Henry (Palmer); Susan Renfrew (Bernardston); Russ Sabadosa (East Longmeadow); Rick Sawicki, Immediate Past President of RAPV (Erving); Brian Sears (Springfield); Kevin Sears (Springfield); Vincent Walsh (Springfield) and Gill and Peggy Woods (Holyoke).

During the meetings, Alford and other attendees also heard from industry experts and leaders, including Acting Director of the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection (CFPB) Mick Mulvaney, who spoke about the latest initiatives out of the CFPB, plans for improved efficiency of agency operations, as well as his perspectives on issues shaping the real estate industry.

In addition, attendees heard from U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Secretary Dr. Ben Carson, who discussed the nation's commitment to fair housing during the conference's General Session; U.S.

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Rep. Emanuel Cleaver (D-Missouri), who shared a personal story with attendees about the importance of safe and affordable housing for all Americans; REALTOR.com® Chief Economist Danielle Hale, who provided an overview of current conditions in the residential and commercial markets; Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator William “Brock” Long, who addressed a broad range of disaster and emergency management topics, such as National Flood Insurance Program reauthorization and federal disaster relief; and NAR Chief Economist Lawrence Yun, who shared residential and commercial real estate market updates and forecasts for the remainder of 2018.

REALTOR® members of RAPV also had the opportunity to explore the latest industry innovations and receive the most recent information on the products and services from more than 100 industry-leading companies that participated during the trade expo.

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### **Mission:**

To advance professionalism within our real estate community and to protect private property rights through education, advocacy and the Realtor® Code of Ethics.

### **About the REALTOR® Association of Pioneer Valley:**

Organized in 1915, the REALTOR® Association of Pioneer Valley is a professional trade organization with more than 1,700 members. The term REALTOR® is registered as the exclusive designation of members of the National Association of REALTORS® who subscribe to a strict code of ethics and enjoy continuing education programs.