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The 2021 Legislative session was a mixture of elation and disappointment. Many wins were chalked up; but in the end, there was no funding for homes for working families, seniors, veterans and those with permanent disabilities.

2021 session bills supported by Montana Housing Coalition:

SB 117: allow Montana Housing Fund at the Montana Board of Housing (MBOH) to provide grants for home development

Sponsored by Senator Tom Jacobson, this bill died in committee, on a party line vote. This bill was step one of a strategy to seek a direct appropriation in a future session, by getting the grants language into the enabling legislation for the Montana Housing Fund, which is limited to loans only today. The committee wanted to limit the grants language to two years and COVID relief only; which was too limiting.

HB 304: redefine definition of Community Land Trust

Representative Frank Garner successfully carried this bill, which passed with strong votes in committees and both houses. The bill corrected code language so that land trusts can be used for any type of housing as defined by law: single family, condos and townhomes.

HB 21: allocate additional \$15 million to the Coal Trust Homes Loan Committee

Representative Geraldine Custer carried this bill, with the help of Representative Dave Fern, who successfully carried the bill in 2019 session. The bill passed the House, then died in Senate committee. There was concern that too much of the Coal Trust was invested in loans, leaving too little to be invested by the Montana Board of Investments. The interest rate on the Coal Trust Loans is equal to or better than the rate of return on the general Coal Trust, but that argument was not successful. The total amount in the Coal Trust exceeds one billion dollars.

HB 397: create a state Housing Tax Credit

Representative Josh Kassmier was successful in getting this bill through the House committee and full House. It passed the Senate Tax Committee and the Senate floor; then was referred to Senate Finance and Claims, where it languished late in the session. Senator Brian Hoven blasted the bill out of committee and it passed the full Senate by one vote. The governor vetoed the bill on Friday, May 14. His veto message referred to the amount of Federal tax credit funding already available and the possibility that the Feds might send more tax credits which would then increase the fiscal impact on Montana's budget, since the amount of state tax credits was pegged at the amount of Federal tax credits. Although this is great progress and the first time the Workforce Housing Tax

Credit has reached the Governor's office, there is great disappointment that this tool is not available to increase the amount of workforce homes in Montana.

SB 269: opportunity to purchase for manufactured housing community residents
Senator Brian Hoven had three bills dealing with manufactured housing communities, in response to his constituents who live in MH communities which have been purchased by an out-of-state investment firm, which raised rates and fees significantly. SB 269, to provide an opportunity for a resident cooperative to purchase the community in which they live, morphed into a bill that provides 100% capital gains tax credit for sellers who sell to residents, government or a non-profit organization. It also creates a process where MBOH each year sends a notice to all MH community owners that details the benefits of selling to residents and provides a contact with NeighborWorks Montana to help organize the resident if the owner is ready to sell.

The Coalition also testified in support of funding homes with COVID relief funds from the American Recovery Plan Act. HB 632 creates various panels to review applications for ARPA funding. Although funding for housing is not specifically called out, with the exception of homeless dedicated housing, there is a possibility that developers and cities and counties can apply for funding for infrastructure for new homes and apartments. The application process will be created through the Department of Commerce.