

**MORE ONLINE**

During April, Fair Housing Month, view the fair housing resources, at [REALTOR.org/realtormag](http://REALTOR.org/realtormag).

# Our equality mission

I have a good-news story for you, one that demonstrates the contribution REALTORS® have made in bringing equality to housing. The story begins in 1988 with the passage of amendments to the 1968 Fair Housing Act and continues to this day as we undertake our annual celebration of Fair Housing Month.

Most of us know well the basics of the fair housing statute: The 1968 law, as amended, prohibits discrimination in the sale, rental, and financing of housing on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status, and disability. But it's important that we also recognize what REALTORS® have achieved in following both the letter and the spirit of that law.

Between 1989 and 2000, the last year for which figures are available, housing discrimination declined significantly. In the sale of homes over that period, there was a 41 percent decrease in discrimination against

## Embracing fair housing principles all year long

African Americans and a 26 percent decrease in discrimination against Hispanics, according to U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development data. To understand how REALTORS® helped bring that drop about, you need to know about the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® activities on the fair housing front over the past 15 years.

NAR championed the 1988 law, which added families and persons with disabilities to the list of protected classes. After its passage, the association developed an award-winning curriculum to help members apply fair housing law in the sale and rental of property.

Subsequently, we upped the bar, encouraging members to seek out minorities as customers and associates. Since 1999, more than 12,000 REALTORS®

and association executives have completed our "At Home with Diversity: One America" training program. The program gives members the information they need to attract a diverse customer base and sales force.



NAR President  
Walt McDonald

In the year we introduced the course, NAR's membership was only about 5 percent minority. Today, 10 percent, or 100,000, of our nearly 1 million members are minorities. You could look at that percentage and say we still have room to improve. Indeed, U.S. Census data shows that about 31 percent of the general population is minority. But I'd rather look at how far we've come: Minorities made up almost a quarter of the growth in our membership.

In 2000, we took another step to heal the wounds of past discrimination. We joined several minority associations in a new awards program to help close the homeownership gap that exists between minorities and white non-Hispanics. The HOPE Awards ([www.hopeawards.org](http://www.hopeawards.org)) are given every other year (next in 2005) to individuals and organizations that have made a significant contribution to expanding minority homeownership.

I look forward to seeing the awards program continue until we erase the gap in homeownership levels. It won't be easy. Discrimination still happens, because we can't control the minds of those who choose to see differences where none exist. But we can keep working to minimize discrimination's impact. That's why we don't just teach but also embrace the principles of fair housing. That's why we encourage diversity in our communities and our profession. That's why every April we celebrate equal housing opportunity for all.

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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®

The Voice for Real Estate®

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The NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® supports the federal Fair Housing Act, which prohibits discrimination in housing because of race or color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status (including children under the age of 18 living with parents or legal custodians, pregnant women, and people securing custody of children under 18), and handicap or disability.

