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Columnists

### Chris Meek: Pushing for recovery in housing market

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While President Obama pushes a bloated jobs package and Democrats in Congress engage in partisan finger-pointing, one vitally important aspect of our economic recovery appears to have been overlooked: the housing market.

Without a healthy and stabilized housing market, full economic recovery is not possible and prolonged instability will leave generations of Americans suffering the consequences of inaction.

More importantly, however, are the lasting effects of foreclosure on those families forced out of their homes. Dreams are shattered, confidence is broken, and the consequences seem as though they will never end. Families who face foreclosure must find a new place to live, suffer the prolonged financial fallout, and are saddled with a tax bill for the remaining mortgage for a house they no longer own.

In September alone, 1,278 Connecticut families filed for foreclosure. That is a staggering number and one that should cause our elected officials to do more to help these suffering families.

In 2009 when I organized our first loan modification event at the Yerwood Center in Stamford, the mission was simple: bring lenders and borrowers together to help families avoid foreclosure and stay in their homes. That day we helped 36 families modify their mortgages and avoid foreclosure. Since then we have held similar events in Bridgeport, Danbury and Hartford that have helped nearly 250 families prevent the pain of foreclosure.

From its inception, START Now! has been glad to partner with several state agencies to bring resources to the struggling families seeking our help. Recently, Governor Malloy announced that together with the Attorney General and the Connecticut Department of Banking the state would host an event following the START Now! model to help more Connecticut families avoid foreclosure.

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I applaud them for taking these important steps towards helping Connecticut families prevent the pain of foreclosure and hope START Now! and the State of Connecticut can continue to work as partners to help Connecticut families who continue to suffer as our economy continues to struggle.

What I have learned in the last few years is that we cannot stop with helping these families when they are in financial trouble; we must go to the root of the problem by helping them find good paying jobs to avoid facing the pitfalls of financial meltdown.

Since our inception, START Now! has organized job readiness workshops partnering with local companies, community colleges and volunteers to help those struggling to find work to prepare resumes and cover letters, learn how to apply for jobs online and hone their interview skills.

I am proud of what START Now! has accomplished and am pleased that our program was able to provide a model for the State of Connecticut. I look forward to continuing our partnership as we work with others in our community to find solutions for those in struggling in these tough economic times.

Chris Meek, of Stamford, is considering a run for Congress in Connecticut's Fourth District in 2012.



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