

# Welcome to the Legislative Corner

## LCAR takes stances on impact fees, Wilderness act

The Las Cruces Association of Realtors (LCAR) has a very robust and active governmental affairs program. This consists of a Legislative Committee made up of volunteer members of LCAR and the chief executive officer who is a professional advocate.

There are many legislative and political issues that pop up regularly on the local level that LCAR keeps tabs on and gets involved with. Some of the issues that have been on the radar recently are impact fees, dust ordinance and wilderness designation to name just a few. The purpose of LCAR's advocacy on any particular issue is to protect private property rights and to help keep housing as affordable as possible. These two motives are always the main consideration when LCAR decides whether or not to make their voice heard in the halls of local government.

### Let's take a look at the issues mentioned above

The City of Las Cruces has been in the process of trying to implement new impact fees that would help pay for new roads, public safety facilities and drainage infrastructure. These fees would be added to the cost of a building permit and most likely passed on to the eventual new home purchaser.

When this process began four years ago, the initial draft of the new fees called for almost \$10,000 in new impact fees. This was deemed by LCAR to be unreasonable and without any economic merit. LCAR has since been successful in negotiating with the city to pare down the fees to around

\$2,200. It is important to understand that LCAR demanded that the city justify what was truly needed and not what they simply desire.

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Another recent issue floating around for about four years was the Wilderness designation bill. Officially known as the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks Wilderness Act, this legislation would have cordoned off several hundreds of thousands of acres in Doña Ana County from motorized or mechanical access.

When this process first started, LCAR took a neutral stance because there was hope at the time that the entire community would be consulted and brought to the table to form a true consensus on what was best for our area. Unfortunately, as time went on it became apparent that the legislation had become co-opted by special interests and extreme environmental advocates who refused to compromise at any reasonable level.

Last summer, LCAR took a stance opposing the bill in its current form and called for changes that would better protect border security and private property rights. Time eventually ran out for the bill and the 2010 Congress adjourned without ever having brought it up for a vote.

As you can see, the LCAR governmental affairs program is a serious one that conducts a lot of research and spends a huge amount of time working with local officials and community groups to find reasonable approaches to the issues affecting affordable housing and property rights