

## Legislation Text

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Recognizing Judge Annette M. Rizzo for her involvement in the ground-breaking Residential Mortgage Foreclosure Diversion Program and thanking her for her hard work and tireless dedication to families throughout the City of Philadelphia by preventing thousands of mortgage foreclosures and helping thousands of Philadelphians resolve complications regarding their Mortgage payments.

WHEREAS, The Residential Mortgage Foreclosure Diversion Program was initiated in April 2008 by the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas to assist families facing eviction from their homes through foreclosure; and

WHEREAS, The three-part program begins with an initial meeting between the homeowner and a housing counselor where they discuss and formulate a loan resolution package. Following this meeting, a conciliation conference is scheduled where proposals to cure the mortgage default are negotiated by the lender's attorney and the homeowner in an attempt to restructure the original mortgage agreement; these courtroom meetings encourage a proactive approach to the problem, as well as compromise between lenders and homeowners. The Door-to-Door Outreach was designed to raise homeowner awareness of the Residential Mortgage Foreclosure Prevention Program. Through this program outreach workers have made more than 3,000 visits to 2,400 properties and increased overall participation in the program by 12 percent. Also, the SaveYourHomePhilly Hotline and counseling service provides legal assistance and additional information about the Program to besieged homeowners throughout the City of Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, With 860,000 property foreclosures in 2008 throughout the United States, the Residential Mortgage Foreclosure Program has effectively addressed this crisis and prevented thousands of mortgage foreclosures throughout the City of Philadelphia. This is reinforced by the fact that 78 percent of those who participated in the program's June 2008 conciliation conferences were still in their homes at year's end. As well as the verity that foreclosure levels were down 20 percent in the second half of 2008, illustrating the effectiveness of the Residential Mortgage Foreclosure Diversion Program in preventing foreclosures and home evictions throughout Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, The Program has been used as a model for other jurisdictions throughout the United States with at least 20 different states having adopted similar versions modeled off of the City's program; and

WHEREAS, Many community outreach groups such as the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) have urged for the program to be enacted nationwide. In a report released in April 2009, ACORN stated "Philadelphia has pioneered an innovative and remarkably effective program... that is easy for homeowners to participate in and utilizes the expertise of housing counselors;" and

WHEREAS, In October 2008, Judge Rizzo was presented with the Judge Lisa A. Richette Outstanding Woman in the Law Award, and in March 2009, she received a Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network Excellence Award for her work concerning to the Residential Mortgage Foreclosure Diversion Program as well as her tireless dedication to residents throughout the City of Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, The Residential Mortgage Foreclosure Diversion Program prevents the continuation of exploitative loan agreements that target struggling families, and in just one year, there have been hundreds of success stories throughout the City of Philadelphia regarding citizens overwhelmed by economic hardship that

were given an opportunity to catch up on their payments and avoid eviction from their homes through the program; and

WHEREAS, On behalf of these citizens, the City of Philadelphia would like to thank Judge Annette Rizzo as well as the various outreach groups and volunteer lawyers that continue to work tirelessly to assist homeowners throughout the City of Philadelphia; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That Council does hereby recognize Judge Annette M. Rizzo for her involvement in the ground-breaking Residential Mortgage Foreclosure Diversion Program and thanks her for her hard work and tireless dedication to families throughout the City of Philadelphia by preventing thousands of mortgage foreclosures and helping thousands of Philadelphians resolve complications regarding their Mortgage payments.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to Judge Annette M. Rizzo as evidence of the sincere sentiments and recognition of this legislative body.