

Grant Installed as State Homebuilders Prez

By Sarah Baker

[Keith Grant](#) of [Keith & David Grant Homes LLC](#) was inducted Saturday, Nov. 5, as 2012 president of the [Tennessee Homebuilders Association Inc.](#) – more than 50 years after his grandfather called the first meeting in Nashville.

Grant, who previously served as vice president/treasurer and budget finance chairman, is proud to carry the family tradition forward and already has a full agenda he plans to tackle during his year in office.

“My grandfather, along with a couple of other guys from Memphis, had gotten a group from Knoxville, Chattanooga and Nashville together. ... You would assume they would have started working with the legislators and the governor, trying to do political-action-type action,” Grant said. “But actually, they started working with the state organizations to try to start working with the state regulatory bodies. And then it morphed over the years, becoming a program where we found it was just as important to get involved in political action, developing friendships and relationships with the state legislators and the governor’s office.”

About 1,500 bills are filed by state legislators every year, Grant said. It’s the THA’s job to pull out the 100 or so that could directly impact the homebuilding industry and monitor those bills on a daily basis as they move through the legislature during session, which opens mid-January and goes through mid-May.

One of the several legislative issues THA is pursuing is preventing fire sprinklers from being required in single-family residential homes across the state. Similar legislation has been passed in a number of other states countrywide over the last several years, Grant said. About four years ago, International Residential Codes adopted a mandate on fire sprinklers being in all residential houses starting with a 2009 code.

“What’s been found across the country is the fire sprinklers don’t save lives, and they end up costing a lot of money to consumers, making houses less affordable,” Grant said. “At the same time, they also create a lot of damage when they leak and that can become costly to homeowners in addition to the initial acquisition costs or the cost incurred to build a home. So, you’re making houses less affordable by putting sprinklers in them.”

THA is not opposed to keeping sprinklers in multifamily dwellings like apartments, condos, or any arrangement with multiple tenants in adjoining units, but only when it comes to single-family



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homes.

The organization is also looking to lobby Public Improvement District legislation. Developers and cities can establish districts – just as the Downtown Memphis Commission does with the Central Business District – and then charge a fee to help redevelop the area.

THA is asking that the state approve PID, which would allow governments to do that in non-business areas. This is another method used elsewhere, but one that Tennessee does not have the legislation to allow.

“We could use it for residential development, whereas it would be a funding mechanism to basically be able to provide funds to help develop areas that aren’t currently developed,” Grant said. “It would all be paid for not by the government; it would be paid for by the people that live within that district.”

On top of tackling those issues, THA will work with the Tennessee Housing Department Agency to come up with more alternatives for financing homes across the state through programs that THDA already has in place, many of which involve aiding first-time homebuyers.

Regardless of the issue at hand, it’s Grant’s goal to promote the positive changes the homebuilding market has seen over the last two years. It’s a message that people need to hear, he said, considering the “doom and gloom” mood that is still prevalent in many people’s minds today.

“Homebuilding has taken a huge hit over the last five years,” Grant said. “But the nice thing is, what we’re seeing is a stability in the new home market over the last 24 months. We’re not seeing declining prices anymore like we were. We have lost some members throughout this. Obviously, quite a few people have gone out of business, but we also have people who are still operating and running successful businesses in this market. We expect to continue, as a homebuilding industry, to grow from this point out of this going forward.”