

00;00;00;22 - 00;00;39;15

Beth

Good evening and welcome to Speaking on Ability with Beth Blick on this podcast we focus on, uh, quality of life issues on, uh, for people with disabilities. And tonight we will be having a conversation on better housing, opportunities for disabled Minnesotans with Representative Alice Hausman. I'm going to let Alice introduce herself.

00;00;41;02 - 00;01;09;22

Alice

Thank you. Thanks for having me. I am right now in my last year at the House of Representatives because I won't be running again in November, but I'm closing it out by being chair of Housing Finance and policy. And we'll talk a little bit about the good news we did. We accomplished a few good things about the issue that you're concerned about, but the end result was still horrible and so your second question to me tonight is, what do we do?

00;01;09;22 - 00;01;23;11

Alice

And I think we have to fix what's broken in the system. And there are several things that I can suggest to you. So looking forward to the conversation this evening.

00;01;23;11 - 00;02;30;27

Beth

Yeah. I was going to ask for how long have you known about the disadvantages? Um, of people with disabilities, uh, being destroyed, discriminated against in the way of having decent housing as an alternative to say, like being in board and care homes and group homes and, and or and or having you know, better housing like, um, uh, you know, private housing in better apartments or uh, uh, uh, you know, other, other than, uh, public housing, which, you know, tends to represent more like, uh, like, you know, um, of nursing home, which is what it feels like to me being in one myself.

00;02;30;27 - 00;02;47;19

Beth

Uh, for instance, uh, there are people with disabilities who would like to do home ownership, and that's what, what I'm looking to do. I'm just interested in knowing. For how long have you been aware of this?

00;02;48;00 - 00;03;15;23

Alice

Yes. And I think we started out with five broad goals. And the first one speaks directly to this. Our first broad goal this last year was our investments. If we really want to resolve the housing issues, our investments have to be along the entire housing continuum. And I would include in that all abilities that that when you say across the entire continuum, continuum that means all abilities.

00;03;15;23 - 00;03;41;03

Alice

We have to build more homes that Minnesotans can afford. We have a couple of tools, housing, infrastructure, bonds, and we'll speak a little more about that that we were hoping for some investment in housing, infrastructure, bonds, leverage, private dollars. We partner with nonprofits, Lutheran Social Service, Catholic Charities, Common Bond, Beacon, Aeon, they all have wonderfully creative and compassionate ideas.

00;03;42;01 - 00;04;10;19

Alice

And so that that was sort of our our first broad goal. Now, we are always educated by the bills that are introduced. And I thought I would start this evening by talking about three bills, three different authors brought that deal with the issue that you're concerned about. And in the House, we were successful about all of them. We heard those three bills and all of them were included in our omnibus bill.

00;04;10;19 - 00;04;30;00

Alice

And so I thought I would say just a word about this. The first one was authored by Representative Her and she has tried this the last couple of years, termination of lease do the tenant infirmity. So this bill allows tenants to terminate their residential these prior to the original end date if they need to move into a medical care facility.

00;04;30;12 - 00;05;00;05

Alice

So in other words, if they that they've signed a lease but they suddenly are unable to continue to live independently there that they can get out of their lease, not at the end of their time, but and not immediately, but within a two month period that they have some now that's not easy to do. The tenant must provide documentation from a medical professional, and the medical care facility includes nursing homes, hospice care, etc..

00;05;00;24 - 00;05;27;22

Alice

And so the medical professional must find that the tenant needs to move into a medical care facility, as well as at least one of the following that the tenant requires assistance with activities of daily living meets the criteria for a nursing facility level of care and has a functional impairment in three or more areas. Believe it or not, we've been trying for several years to accomplish this and we have not been able to.

00;05;27;22 - 00;06;04;05

Alice

And it all has to do with our divided legislature. We passed this in the House. And by the way, I will say the the the politics of this, despite testimony from the Minnesota multi housing which opposed it. They oppose anything that that protects tenants it passed unanimously out of housing and judiciary. It passed unanimously. But the dilemma is the landlord lobby is so strong that even if unanimous movement out of committee, we have not been able to get this in a negotiated bill with the Senate.

00;06;04;16 - 00;06;53;09

Alice

So Representative Her has been working very hard for this. The other one was Representative Reyer, and I don't know if you're keeping records on whether house files would be helpful, but the Representative Her was was house file 400 the represent prior was 2695 accessible use requirements for housing, infrastructure, bond finance projects. In other words, if we're using state money for housing, infrastructure, bond funds, projects that the state requires recipient to use grants through housing and housing, infrastructure bonds or rehab to contain more than 44 units, to include the greater of at least one unit, least 5% of units that are accessible units.

00;06;53;25 - 00;07;23;26

Alice

And that's the state building code. And then the greater of at least one unit or 5% that are sensory accessible units. So soundproofing between shared walls, no fluorescent lighting in units of common areas, low fuel paint, low chemical carpet, low chemical carpets, those kinds of considerations. But if the if they get state money for housing, infrastructure, bonds, there must be a percentage that have this kind of housing accessible for.

00;07;24;17 - 00;07;54;17

Alice

So this one was a Representative Reyer in the house and interestingly carried by Senator Duckworth in the Senate a and so the GOP, by the way, he's an infantry officer in the Minnesota Army National Guard. So what it tells you is this GOP member recognized that veterans and active military service members often need housing that addresses the mobility, disabilities and sensory challenges that occur due to combat combat related injuries.

00;07;54;17 - 00;08;21;23

Alice

So really bipartisan support on both of these bills. And yet because we had to negotiate with the Senate, the Minnesota multi housing, the landlord lobby is so strong that we weren't able to accomplish that. There was one other that represent

Howard had House about 2861 similar to Representative Rayer in that senior housing units, units funded by housing infrastructure bonds.

00;08;21;23 - 00;09;09;01

Alice

If the portion is authorized to serve individuals of any age with intellectual and developmental disabilities, that's the language he used, which was different from Representative Rayer's. So we had three bills all dealt with this, we heard them, we passed them out of committee, they got bipartisan support and then we we failed. Now, I think the couple of things that I would talk about is, one, is this strong lobby, landlord lobby tenant tenant protection, meaning we have had no substantial changes since the eighties to bring Minnesota up to where other states are.

00;09;09;03 - 00;09;35;15

Alice

We we trail other states on the issue, for example, just the one that we dealt with in the at the time of the eviction moratorium in all but three states, there is some sort of notice of eviction. The landlord has to tell the tenant, you're going to be evicted, and that gives them some notice, maybe 15 days or whatever, but that gives them some time to look for funding or to look for other housing.

00;09;37;02 - 00;10;03;21

Alice

All I was able to get, we're one of only three states. All of the other states in this nation allow that and we don't. That's how we trail the nation. You know, we often think of Minnesota as this good progressive state, not on tenant protection. And I'm sure you are feeling that all during this crisis of the eviction moratorium was a temporary notice which expired already in October.

00;10;04;15 - 00;10;39;11

Alice

So that is that is a, you know, one of our major issues. So here's here's the other issue about how our system is broken. So I think your that your second question is, what can people do to help us? Here's what's broken in our system. And I will tell you that, John. Marty, this my my senator constantly says what we are doing when we bundle all bills together at the end and then negotiate with them all together is unconstitutional.

00;10;39;24 - 00;11;04;22

Alice

The constitution says we have a single issue you should be able to tell from the title what's in it. So here's what we did this year. And every year it gets worse. And this is both parties all the all the leaders have to agree. So we you know, we have all these committees, all these tracks. I will tell you that the housing advocates I take no credit for this.

00;11;04;22 - 00;11;29;14

Alice

The thousands of housing advocates who worked hard. We had the best housing bill that the state has ever seen. And we passed it in committee and we passed it to House Ways and Means. And then leadership announced housing wasn't going to travel separately, it was going to be bundled with ag and broadband. So I will tell you, I got quite outspoken this year.

00;11;29;14 - 00;12;03;03

Alice

I publicly at meetings, I publicly for the record argued and explained why my bill was going to go to Ways and Means as a standalone. And that's where Ways and Means members were going to have to make that motion. They were going to have to move to bundle it. And so I in committee publicly begged them not to, that we have to allow these bills to move alone, because otherwise, if you bundle everything and save everything to the end, it dies of its own weight, which is exactly what happened this year.

00;12;03;13 - 00;12;34;18

Alice

So I looked at the members of the committee publicly on the record, and I said, Just because leadership decided to do it this way, you don't have to. Don't make this motion. Don't vote. Not a single member broke ranks. That's how broken our system is, because here's here's what happened. This legislative session, those things that broke free and traveled alone, like veterans, ag, mental health, they all passed.

00;12;35;05 - 00;13;02;13

Alice

Those that were able to break three free of all that bundling were able to be successful. So here's here's what happens to housing. So we hear all the bills in committee. We pass them out of my committee to Ways and Means. Normally in I. And this is how for years this is how it functions. Normally there would have been a conference committee just for housing and I would have been chairing that conference committee.

00;13;02;27 - 00;13;28;16

Alice

And then there are rules that even if the Senate wouldn't call meetings every other day, I could call a meeting. That's what the rules say. So on Monday I could call a meeting. Senate doesn't. On Tuesday I could call another one on Wednesday so I could keep the negotiations going. But guess what? Once it got bundled with ag and broadband, the chairs of the conference committee were the House and Senate ag chairs.

00;13;29;09 - 00;13;55;23

Alice

I wasn't chairing any housing conference committee, so it isn't a surprise that the thing that did get negotiated was the AG bill because the two chairs of the conference committee were the ag chairs. I mean, you can hear my frustration. That's what's broken in a system. That's why things didn't happen. And it hurt housing. It hurt people. It hurt those three bills.

00;13;55;23 - 00;14;25;14

Alice

Those three bills were in my my committee. I never had the opportunity to sit down in a conference committee with the Senate to have public discussions about that. So I need you more than ever. I will tell you that Homes for All strongly supported this agenda, and they strongly supported the the bills that I referenced. I think the I think that they were on board for all three of those.

00;14;25;24 - 00;14;49;05

Alice

So homes for all the coalition was there. But we can't one, we can't give up. This is what I always say. No, it can make you angry that it's that the system is broken. But we can't give up because, you know, it affects the lives of people. Those three bills that I described that would have helped people. You work for and represent.

00;14;49;16 - 00;15;23;24

Alice

So we can't give up because it's too important in their life. They need safe, secure housing. The one other thing I think I would mention is one of the things that might be helpful is to to say we do need different housing models. They don't all have to look the same. For example, one of the things that some have found affordable is going back to the old concept of the rooming house where you have your own bedroom and bathroom and then you live in community.

00;15;24;12 - 00;15;48;27

Alice

It's a rooming house where you share all of the other. And then yesterday, just yesterday, I heard there is a company, I think, in California that has discovered how you can use recycled plastic to do 3M printed the 3M printer, you can print houses and so you can build a house for \$25,000, maybe. The other issue is the affordability piece.

00;15;49;07 - 00;16;16;21

Alice

And then I think for the community you represent, the model that we know works is permanent supportive housing where you build the housing units, but then whatever services are needed are right there to be able to support lives and transform lives and help help them get to a better place. So that model of permanent supportive housing, I think we know is one that that works for a lot of populations.

00;16;17;14 - 00;16;25;28

Alice

So that's a lot of I've thrown through. I should stop and and see what, what where you want to go with this and what questions you might have.

00;16;25;28 - 00;16;26;07

Beth

Yeah.

00;16;28;09 - 00;17;07;16

Beth

Yeah. It sounds like, um, you've had some, uh, uh, disappointments, along with, um, some, um, uh, positive of what, you know, then, uh, happening. Uh, have you, um, gotten anything that involves, um, um, you know, programs that reach out to people with disabilities, cities that might want to own their own homes?

00;17;08;16 - 00;17;51;05

Alice

Well, I'm wondering if they said we have a program called homeownership Education, Counseling and Training. Now, that's grants to community based organizations to help prepare buyers for success through the full cycle of purchasing and buying a home. Because, I mean, in terms of allowing the opportunity to purchase a home, that's where you build wealth. And so we hope, as we're talking about all abilities, that really all abilities are able to access the housing across the so it looks it so that program assists those looking to refinance and those who are at risk of foreclosure.

00;17;51;25 - 00;18;16;23

Alice

Now some participate in the class and are ready to go. Others work with advisors for up to two years because they need more assistance in getting through that process. But I can tell you the demand for all of these services where you provide support for individuals going through the process of finding housing secure and safe, housing demand for these services has increased.

00;18;18;09 - 00;18;43;00

Alice

So we we have we have a ways to go. And this tenant protection, I think, is the thing that discourages me. So because you're dealing with a very vulnerable population that they have to have these tenant protections built in that assure there is hard housing carved out for them with the with the very specific needs they have.

00;18;44;06 - 00;18;52;02

Beth

Oh, yes. At least.

00;18;52;02 - 00;18;54;09

Matt

Did you have any other questions for Alice?

00;18;55;16 - 00;19;04;09

Beth

Um, I. I can't think of any.

00;19;05;06 - 00;19;29;24

Alice

I should tell you one more thing about for the issue of housing, how bad is up this year? At the start I told all the housing advocates. Now it'll be a little hard for you to track what we're accomplishing in housing this year because you have to follow four bills. There will be some housing in the bonding bill, some in the tax bill, some in Health Human Services and some in my Minnesota housing.

00;19;30;06 - 00;19;54;06

Alice

So there are four bills that and we're we're moving issues in all four of those bills. None of those four made it through the process. They were all caught in a mess of bundling the bills. So all that promise and all the work we did and all those thousands of the housing advocates who helped none of those four bills made it through the process.

00;19;54;21 - 00;20;13;09

Alice

So I, I have so much anger and so much frustration, and we are failing the people of Minnesota. And so we do need the voices of Minnesota and people in your community who are working so hard to represent those special needs to just be at the table and not give up.

00;20;15;02 - 00;20;22;24

Beth

So what you're saying is some things did make it and some didn't. So I'm a little bit confused.

00;20;22;27 - 00;20;45;20

Alice

Well, none of none of those four. I mean, so we didn't get a bonding bill that funded any housing that was going to have housing, infrastructure or bonds. And your bonding for public housing, some tax credits in the tax bill, some in the case of Health and Human Services, some services associated with that are needed for housing stability.

00;20;45;26 - 00;20;53;11

Alice

And then my housing finance, which had the tenant protection, the three bills that I discussed and so much more, none of.

00;20;53;11 - 00;20;53;17

Alice

Them.

00;20;55;07 - 00;20;58;21

Alice

So it we this is hurting Minnesota. This is hurting.

00;20;58;21 - 00;20;59;19

Beth

Oh, it is.

00;21;00;03 - 00;21;14;26

Alice

And so now I would say we're I still have hope in the homes for all coalition has helped by bringing all the voices together and I don't know if you're part of homeschool coalition or not but.

00;21;14;29 - 00;21;15;13

Beth

Know.

00;21;15;26 - 00;21;16;27

Alice

The advantages.

00;21;16;28 - 00;21;17;07

Beth

Of it.

00;21;17;28 - 00;21;49;29

Alice

The advantages it has is all the advocacy groups come together and speak with a single voice and bring the power of of people to the process. And in a few years, they have been enormously successful. This year they worked very hard. They were in the hallways. They were handing out fliers. But that's how dysfunctional the legislature was this year, I believe.

00;21;49;29 - 00;21;56;20

Alice

But we don't give up because it's a real equal. And you've told their stories.

00;21;56;20 - 00;21;59;09

Beth

Thank you. And what are they called now?

00;22;00;18 - 00;22;02;15

Alice

This is the Homes for All Coalition.

00;22;03;12 - 00;22;04;24

Beth

The Homes.

00;22;04;28 - 00;22;07;11

Alice

Homes for All for.

00;22;07;13 - 00;22;10;15

Beth

All. Homes for all.

00;22;11;03 - 00;22;15;23

Alice

And they'll organize again during the interim a next year. So I'll suggest they.

00;22;15;23 - 00;22;17;20

Beth

Have the legislative session.

00;22;18;16 - 00;22;26;08

Alice

Yeah, we'll, we'll make sure they reach out to you. Will anything else I can I can help you with?

00;22;27;22 - 00;22;34;11

Beth

Um, well, I would certainly like in a few, you know, kept in touch with me about.

00;22;35;14 - 00;22;36;07

Alice

I will, you.

00;22;36;07 - 00;22;37;06

Beth

Know, all of this.

00;22;40;03 - 00;22;54;15

Alice

And the three bills I'm sure they'll continue to work on so it's Representative Her, Representative Reyer and Representative Howard all had individual bills specifically dealing with the the need for all abilities to be served by housing.

00;22;55;16 - 00;23;04;24

Beth

I think absolutely it sounds like you got, you know, got the ball rolling anyway even if they didn't pass per se

00;23;04;24 - 00;23;08;01

Alice

Well, they all passed in the house and they all were already.

00;23;08;04 - 00;23;20;24

Alice

Passed. So what you're saying is that it was certainly passed in the House, but they didn't pass in the Senate because the Senate is predominantly Republican as well.

00;23;20;24 - 00;23;24;16

Alice

And it's so driven by the landlord lobby. I have to tell you, in the.

00;23;24;16 - 00;23;28;19

Alice

Landlord lobby, like you say, yeah, that's what's going on.

00;23;28;19 - 00;23;35;12

Alice

They can just shut down any movement at all.

00;23;35;12 - 00;23;41;19

Beth

Do you, by the way, have the phone number for the Homes for All Coalition?

00;23;41;19 - 00;23;54;23

Alice

Don't have phone numbers right here, but I have your email and so I will be sure to get you. I know, I know all that. Okay. So I'll be sure to get get all of that to you.

00;23;54;23 - 00;23;57;24

Beth

Okay. That's fine. Thanks so much.

00;23;58;04 - 00;24;17;10

Alice

I want to say Thank You for all you're doing, you know, this is a partnership. We need one another. I need you. And you know, I'm in the right place at the right time doing the right thing. So I really see this as a partnership that we need each other. That's that's what I see.

00;24;17;10 - 00;24;21;00

Beth

Yeah, you bet. Thank you.

00;24;21;11 - 00;24;30;04

Alice

Like this right time doing the right thing. So I really see this as a partnership that we need each other. That's what I see.

00;24;30;04 - 00;24;33;25

Beth

Yeah, you bet. Thank you.