

# NEWS RELEASE

---

**JOSEPH A. SMITH, JR.**  
**COMMISSIONER OF BANKS**

---

**RELEASE: IMMEDIATE**  
**CONTACT: HA NGUYEN**  
**PHONE: 919/733-3016**

**DATE: February 22, 2010**  
**DISTRIBUTION: STATEWIDE**

---

## **3,000 Foreclosures Prevented Through State Home Foreclosure Prevention Program**

RALEIGH—The N.C. Office of the Commissioner of Banks (NCCOB) announced today that the State Home Foreclosure Prevention Project (SHFPP) has helped over 3,000 North Carolina homeowners avoid foreclosure. In addition, more than 8,000 other homeowners have met with non-profit housing counselors to get free advice and assistance in dealing with their finances and mortgage problems.

“Our program is helping homeowners save their home,” said Mark Pearce, Chief Deputy Commissioner of Banks. “However, the down economy continues to push more homeowners toward foreclosure. I urge homeowners who may be struggling to pay their bills for the first time to call for free assistance.”

Homeowners seeking help from SHFPP can receive free assistance over the phone by calling toll-free, **1-866-234-4857** (8:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m., Mon.-Fri.; 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Sat.). In addition, homeowners may wish to meet with a local counselor directly. A full list of these counselors and additional information can be found at [www.fightncforeclosure.org](http://www.fightncforeclosure.org).

NCCOB estimates the impact of avoiding foreclosures on these homes has prevented almost \$270 million in neighboring property value declines and financial system losses. Utilizing 34 local non-profit counseling agencies across the state and one national non-profit phone counseling agency, the program has prevented foreclosures in 99 of North Carolina's 100 counties. Last year, there were over 60,000 foreclosure filings in North Carolina, and that number is expected to increase in 2010 due to the economic downturn and job losses. However, North Carolina has one of the lowest foreclosure rates in the country (37<sup>th</sup> out of 50 states, according to RealtyTrac's latest foreclosure report: <http://www.realtytrac.com/contentmanagement/pressrelease.aspx?channelid=9&itemid=8533>).

NCCOB also asks homeowners to beware of foreclosure assistance scams. It is illegal to charge upfront fees in North Carolina for foreclosure assistance services. Often, scammers will take the homeowner's money and never contact the mortgage servicer. Scams can be reported to the Attorney General's office at 1-877-5-NO-SCAM or by filing a complaint at [www.ncdoj.gov](http://www.ncdoj.gov).

SHFPP involves a network of State agencies, HUD-certified counselors, legal service providers and non-profit organizations working together to help homeowners avoid foreclosure. The Fight NC Foreclosure campaign aims to raise awareness about the State foreclosure prevention program, and involves NCCOB, the Attorney General's Office, the Center for Responsible Lending, Capitol Broadcasting, the N.C. Association of REALTORS®, State Employees Credit Union, and the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation. The public service announcement airs on Fox 50 and is available at [www.fightncforeclosure.org](http://www.fightncforeclosure.org).

NCCOB regulates state-chartered banks, thrifts, savings and loans, trust companies, and more than 600 mortgage lenders/servicers/brokers and 6,000 loan officers, as well as numerous consumer finance companies, check-cashers, and other financial services. NCCOB is funded by industry fees and assessments and not taxpayer dollars.

# # #