

House backs crumbling foundation loan program

By Eric Bedner

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HARTFORD — The House overwhelmingly approved a bill Thursday that would establish a low-interest loan program to help homeowners with crumbling foundations pay for parts of their home and property that are not covered by the captive insurance company providing assistance for foundation replacements.

The program would create a low-interest loan program that would provide up to \$20 million, with the state guaranteeing \$2 million in order to protect private banks from potential defaults.

A public-private partnership funded by banks and backed by the state would provide loans up to \$75,000 for up to 20

years at a rate between roughly 2.5 percent to about 3.2 percent.

The captive insurance company provides up to \$175,000 to affected homeowners, but the funds can be used only for foundation replacements.

In order to qualify for a low-interest loan, an affected homeowner first must have gone through the process of receiving a participation agreement or a grant from the captive.

Proponents of the bill said their intention is to offer a way for homeowners to pay for other repairs, such as driveways, decks, and landscaping, that could be destroyed while replacing a foundation.

The bill passed on a 131-7 vote, and now awaits action in the Senate.

Rep. Craig Fishbein, R-Wallingford,

questioned why taxpayers should be on the hook if borrowers default on their loans, saying the state should have no role in a loan between a private bank and an individual homeowner.

Rep. Jason Doucette, D-Manchester, said that in the case of a default, the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority would hold the mortgage and would have the ability to foreclose.

Rep. Thomas Delnicki, R-South Windsor, said it would be unlikely for borrowers to default after paying their taxes and mortgage, going through the captive process, and then applying for a loan.

"I dare say that would probably be one of the most secure vehicles that a financial institution would ever have when it comes to making a loan," he said. "These

are necessary repairs. These aren't scofflaws. ... These are people that want to finish making that home livable."

Rep. Geoffrey Luxenberg, D-Manchester, agreed, saying, "these are the safest loans in America."

Delnicki noted there would be an added benefit to affected municipalities that would be able to get more homes fully back on the tax rolls after they are reassessed at their proper value.

Rep. Christopher Davis, R-Ellington, a fiscal conservative, said he feels the loan program is well structured and likely would put the state at minimal risk because eligible homeowners would have to already have proven they are affected by going through the captive.

New York moves to ensure Trump pardons can't nix state charges

By David Klepper

Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. — A presidential pardon won't be enough to clear someone associated with the commander-in-chief of similar state charges under legislation approved by New York state lawmakers

allows the president to pardon state crimes, must be closed," James, a Democrat, told reporters after the bill passed the Assembly on Tuesday. She said presidential pardons shouldn't "be used as a get-out-of-jail-free card."

Republicans argued the bill is a partisan attack on Trump and accused Democrats of trying to rewrite the law to

and abuse of presidential power," said Democratic Assemblyman Joe Lentol.

Still, some lawmakers made it clear that they had a specific commander in chief in mind when they voted yes Tuesday.

"We are dealing with a criminal in the White House," Democratic Assemblyman Michael Blake said of Trump.

people for whom presidential pardons would not be sufficient: members of a president's family, their government and campaign staff, employees of a president's private business or nonprofit, as well as anyone else who prosecutors believe may have conspired with an associate of the president.

Prosecutors in New York are in the midst of several investigations related to