Realtors seek help from leaders



State Democratic Pary Chairman Dick Harpootlian, left, and state Republican Party Chairman Chad Connelly, right, each told a gathering of Realtors their party has the best solutions for dealing with job creation and education. KEN OSBURN/STAFF

Parties promise action on economy

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The state's chairmen of the Republican and Democratic parties said Thursday that a way to improve the economy, education and other needs in the state is to vote for their party.

Dick Harpootlian, chairman of the state Democratic Party, and Chad Connelly, chairman of the state GOP, offered those and other remedies during a forum at the South Carolina Association of Realtors annual meeting in Greenville.

Nick Kremydas, chief executive officer of the SCR, moderated the forum, asking the chairmen to share their party's plans for tackling the state's "dismal" unemployment rate, job creation, employment, inequities in property taxes, mortgage interest deduction, redistricting and other matters important to the real estate industry.

"We need specifics, not speeches," Kremydas said after the forum. "We are looking to both parties to reform our state, from property taxes to general taxes. We're excited about the prospect that they're talking. I believe there will be some fruitful discussions as a result of the meeting so we can move our state forward."

Kremydas said the only thing that's keeping South Carolina from being No. 1 in every business and education category is policies which are set by elected officials. Policies, some on the state and some on the federal level, are having a negative impact on the South Carolina's housing market, he said.

Connelly and Harpootlian agreed that what happens with the federal government impacts what happens in the state. Connelly's answer to change is to vote Republican, and Harpootlian said to vote Democrat.

Connelly said realtors are hurting because the economy's in bad shape and the economy's in bad shape because people don't have confidence in the president's leadership.

"The president's leadership involves more taxes, stimulus packages that cost money and makes people less confident in the economy, and what's going on with Obamacare saddles them," he said.

Harpootlian said the best way to help Realtors is to lower property taxes and the only way to lower property taxes is to have comprehensive tax reform.

"To do that, the Republican legislature and the Republican governor would have to come up with a plan. But, they don't have the political guts to attack comprehensive tax reform so these real estate agents out there, they're not going to get any relief unless the Republican are forced into it," he said.