

# MEMO OF MEMBERS

*The Weekly Newsletter of the National Low Income Housing Coalition*

## NLIHC 2012 CONFERENCE REPORT

### 2012 Housing Policy Conference a Resounding Success; Plenary Speakers Rally the Crowd

Hundreds of public and assisted housing residents, advocates, policymakers and researchers converged on the nation's capital March 25-28 for NLIHC's Annual Housing Policy Conference and Lobby Day. Four outstanding plenary speakers provided inspiration and 40 workshops covered the gamut of issues of concern to the attendees.

**Eugene Robinson.** The conference opened with an address by *Washington Post* columnist and Pulitzer Prize winning author Eugene Robinson. He offered the stark contrast between the Obama Administration's FY13 budget request and the FY13 budget resolution put forth the week of March 19 by House Committee on Budget Chair Paul Ryan (R-WI), which Mr. Robinson said relies on the private sector to address the needs of the nation's most vulnerable. Mr. Robinson also said Chairman Ryan's budget would be the biggest transfer of wealth from poor to rich in the history of the United States.

Mr. Robinson called on conference attendees to be active in this year's presidential election, whatever their party affiliation. Responding to an audience question about voter fraud, Mr. Robinson said that voter suppression efforts are a solution to a problem that does not exist.

When asked why the media did not cover the shortage of rental housing for low income people, he lamented the decline in local reporters assigned to the housing beat. He also promised to write more about the issues himself.

The plenary was sponsored by the Bank of America. Ken Wade, Senior Community Affairs Executive, Global Marketing & Corporate Affairs, brought greetings from the bank.

Following his speech, Mr. Robinson signed copies of his latest book, *Disintegration: The Splintering of Black America*, for an eager crowd.

**Barney Frank.** In a rousing speech at the noon plenary on Monday, March 26, Representative Barney Frank (D-MA) said that of his time in Congress, the one thing he is "most proud of is the establishment of the National Housing Trust Fund." Mr. Frank was the key legislator in the development and passage of the National Housing Trust Fund (NHTF) and has championed funding the NHTF in the House. As he prepares to retire from the House of Representatives at the end of the 112th Congress, Mr. Frank reflected that his two

regrets are not having funded the NHTF and not having passed further laws to prevent discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Taking the podium after being greeted with a standing ovation, Mr. Frank said he is retiring because he is "kind of tired and I need to find other ways to find fairness in this country." His motivation in public service, he said, has been to make peoples' lives better. Mr. Frank said Sheila Crowley, President and CEO of NLIHC, has been "one of a handful of people that have been my mentors, my teachers."

Mr. Frank said that Congress should fund the NHTF as part of its restructuring of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac in the next Congress. "If Barack Obama is reelected, I believe that we will get funding for NHTF. If not, we won't, it will get Etch-A-Sketched out."

Mr. Frank discussed what he sees as the "denigration of rental housing," saying that lawmakers only envision large public housing developments that have been underfunded when discussing rental housing. "While it is true that a lot of people live in terrible housing, it is also true that it was not their idea" to live in such conditions, said Mr. Frank.

"We are going to have to reduce the federal deficit. The amount we are spending on the military has to change," Mr. Frank said. "It will be a scant victory if we get funding for the NHTF when other housing funding goes away," he added.

"There should be no deal on housing finance without a portion of funding going to the NHTF," Mr. Frank said. "There is now recognition that we were right when we talked about the need for a range of [housing] options for low income people," Mr. Frank said.

In his closing words on the NHTF, Mr. Frank said, "funding the NHTF will be a major advance in social policy."

In her introduction of Mr. Frank, Ms. Crowley recalled NLIHC's long partnership with him and his staunch advocacy for the NHTF. She commended him on his effective style of leadership when he was Chairman of the House Financial Services Committee. Ms. Crowley cited three qualities that she associates with Mr. Frank. She said he is brilliant and the country is fortunate that he used his great intellect for the public good. She also said he is scrupulously honest, and in a "town that is polluted with money," Mr. Frank "never cashed in." Finally, Ms. Crowley said that he was "rarely cheerful, but always funny" and that he used humor to make friends out of his opponents.

After Mr. Frank's remarks, the Boston Housing Authority's Resident Advisory Board presented Mr. Frank with an award for his unshakeable support for low income residents in Boston. "I will always remember the day that the first resident was appointed to the Boston Housing Authority board," Mr. Frank said proudly to the resident group members.

Finally, Ms. Crowley presented Mr. Frank with a “Tribute Book” in which most of the people at the conference had written individual notes of appreciation to him for his many years of service.

**Arlene Holt Baker.** Arlene Holt Baker, Executive Vice President of the AFL-CIO, gave the lunch plenary address on March 27. Her wide-ranging address covered issues from the role of the union movement in American democracy to the importance of advocacy in the face of changing campaign finance laws.

Ms. Holt Baker began her speech by reflecting on the difficulties of low income people in the Texas town where she grew up, saying that knowing their struggle to maintain their housing and other basic needs is what drives her every day.

Describing the work of the AFL-CIO to hold banks accountable for their role in the foreclosure crisis, Ms. Holt Baker said the union movement understands the importance of housing and would continue to work to ensure those responsible pay their fair share. “The spirit of the 12 million members of AFL-CIO will be right there with you when you go to the Hill to see your elected officials,” she said.

Ms. Holt Baker devoted the core of her address to deconstructing the ongoing efforts to use voter identification laws to suppress votes, couching these laws in the context of broader efforts to de-fund public housing, eliminate prevailing wage laws and prevent workers from organizing. She noted that 11%, or 21 million, Americans do not have government issued photo identification, calling voter identification laws a “pretty targeted” effort to prevent elderly, poor, young and African-American people from exercising their right to vote.

Attendees were provided with an AFL-CIO toolkit for addressing voter suppression techniques in their communities. In spite of the mounting threats to civic engagement, Ms. Holt Baker assured attendees that there is hope for positive change. “We may not have the dollars, but we have our spirit, our communities and our neighborhoods,” she said. “The numbers are on our side.”

In closing, Ms. Holt Baker wove the journey of the union movement together with that of the civil rights movement, and current efforts to ensure marriage equality and immigration reform. “That’s why we continue to march,” she said. “There is so much left to be done.... You will go home, fight for what you believe and hold our politicians accountable. It is up to us.”

Ms. Holt Baker’s address was sponsored by the AFL-CIO Housing Investment Trust and the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME).

**Cecilia Muñoz.** Cecilia Muñoz, Director of the White House Domestic Policy Council (DPC) was the final plenary speaker at the NLIHC conference. She is President Obama’s Advisor on all matters of domestic policy. The DPC is the coordinating body for the domestic policy decisions made in the White House.

Ms. Muñoz opened her remarks by “reaffirming the Administration’s

support for the National Housing Trust Fund” and said that it is “long past time for a dedicated source of funding” to be established for the NHTF. The Administration included a \$1 billion capitalization for the NHTF in its FY13 budget request and in its housing recovery plan (see Memo, 2/3, 2/17).

In her remarks about budget priorities for FY13, Ms. Muñoz noted that the Administration has placed a particular emphasis on veterans, as veterans are twice as likely to become homeless than the population as a whole. NLIHC held a series of workshops at its conference focused on strategies on ending homelessness among veterans by 2015, a goal articulated by the Administration in its plan to end homelessness, “Opening Doors” (see Memo, 6/25/10). Ms. Muñoz said that the Administration is on track to meet this goal.

Ms. Muñoz ended her remarks by describing how the priorities articulated in the House-passed “Ryan Budget” (see elsewhere in Memo) puts programs such as Tenant-Based Rental Assistance and McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants at risk, and that we are at a “make-or-break” moment for the nation.

The conference’s 40 action-packed workshops provided attendees with substantive and practical knowledge they could take home and apply in their communities. This year’s workshops were structured to allow attendees to maximize their time and focus their attention. Topics revolved around housing policy, research, resident issues and advocacy efforts. With the support of the Home Depot Foundation, three workshops focused on the housing needs of our nation’s veterans.

NLIHC hosted a Legislative Action Center, where NLIHC staff provided talking points, directions and data from the Congressional District Profiles to support advocates’ visits to their Congressional delegations. All conference attendees received NLIHC’s 2012 *Advocates’ Guide to Housing and Community Development Policy*, sponsored again this year by PNC Bank. Also, courtesy of Volunteers of America, attendees were given *Congressional Directories* for the 2nd Session of the 112th Congress.

NLIHC’s Lobby Day materials are available at: [www.nlihc.org/whatwedo/conference/lobbyday](http://www.nlihc.org/whatwedo/conference/lobbyday)

## Research Workshop Highlights Persistent and Growing Income Inequality Trends

One of the most well-received workshops at the 2012 Housing Policy Conference featured recent research findings on wealth and inequality in the United States. Speakers at the workshop entitled “Income Inequality: Poverty, Mobility and Access to Opportunity” were Heidi Shierholz, an economist with the Economic Policy Institute, and Melissa Boteach, Director of the Half in Ten Campaign at the Center for American Progress.

Ms. Shierholz presented evidence that while productivity has risen since the 1970s, real income growth remained essentially flat

among low to moderate income families as income grew among the wealthiest households, contributing to rising income inequality. Since 1979, the wages and salaries of the top 1% the population by salary rose 156%, excluding capital gains and investments. During the same time period, salaries among the bottom 90% of households by income rose just 17%.

Ms. Shierholz then focused on the recent recession, showing that the greatest losses in income between 2007 and 2010 occurred among the bottom fifth of families by income (11.3%) while the losses experienced during this period by the top fifth amounted to a more modest 4.5%. Lastly, she offered insight into social mobility trends, examining the ability of Americans to move between income classes over their lifetimes. According to the recent research, those born into a low income American family have only an 18% chance of rising into the top 40% of income earners, a probability rate much lower than comparable European nations.

Ms. Boteach then presented Half in Ten's framework for reducing inequality in the United States. Over the next ten years, the campaign will measure the nation's progress towards reducing poverty using indicators across three categories: creating good jobs, strengthening families, and promoting economic security. The Half in Ten campaign offers advocates a toolkit to launch effective advocacy campaigns focused on poverty and inequality. The toolkit includes tips on launching a campaign, community organizing and building relationships with elected officials. The Half in Ten website also includes a series of useful tools and resources for advocates including interactive maps and a data library covering a broad range of poverty indicators for each state and congressional district.

Half in Ten invites those affected by anti-poverty programs to share their story by adding to their story bank, which aims to put a human face on the fight to prevent cuts to social safety net programs, including affordable housing programs. Half in Ten brought its story project to the conference on March 27, recording the personal stories of public and assisted housing residents whose lives had been changed for the better through access to safe, decent affordable housing.

The Half in Ten toolkit is available at: <http://halfinten.org/indicators/publications/toolkit>

The Half in Ten interactive maps are available at: <http://halfinten.org/issues/articles/interactive-map-2010-poverty-data-by-state/>

The Half in Ten data library is available at: <http://halfinten.org/indicators/data>

Those who wish to record and upload their own stories to Half in Ten's website may do so here: [www.halfinten.org/stories/submit](http://www.halfinten.org/stories/submit)

Presentations from both of these speakers will be available on NLIHC's website at: [www.nlihc.org/whatwedo/conference](http://www.nlihc.org/whatwedo/conference)

## NLIHC Presents 2012 Media and Organizing Awards

NLIHC's 2012 Media, State and Local, and Resident Organizing Awards were presented on March 27 at the NLIHC Annual Meeting during NLIHC's Housing Policy Conference by NLIHC Board Members Leonard Williams and Daisy Franklin. The awards recognize housing advocacy accomplishments in 2011.

"Each of our three award winners being recognized today accomplished something inspiring, motivation, passionate, determined," said Mr. Williams. "Each of them brought positive change, all in the name of the mission that binds us all: the fight for fair and affordable housing."

**Katy Reckdahl** of the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* was awarded the 2012 Media Award for her ongoing coverage of public housing, homelessness and disaster recovery. Her stories cover Public and Section 8 Housing, homelessness, and how New Orleans cultural institutions are affected by city or police policy. In 2011 alone, Ms. Reckdahl wrote over 30 news stories on the housing Authority of New Orleans and the personal experiences of low income New Orleans residents. A listing of Ms. Reckdahl's articles is available on the NLIHC website at <http://nlihc.org/whatwedo/recognition/media-award>.

"Hurricane Katrina showed more than ever that low income housing is essential to the overall health of the city," said Ms. Reckdahl. "While the issue is still important more than six years after the hurricane, its moment in the spotlight has passed. In order to get past the 'Why do I care?' moment with readers, I believe the linkage between many current issues and the damage to low income housing still has to be clear."

The NLIHC Media Award recognizes print journalists who make a dedicated effort to inform the public about the inequities in housing and to add to the understanding of the disparities between the well housed and the poorly or un-housed in our country.

The **North Dakota Coalition for Homeless People** (NDCHP), an NLIHC state coalition partner, was awarded the 3rd Annual State and Local Organizing Award for its work on a state-level campaign that led to the creation of North Dakota's Housing Incentive Fund, which provides \$15 million for affordable housing development and supportive services.

"The establishment of the North Dakota Housing Incentive Fund is a victory by many," said Michael Carbone, Executive Director of NDCHP. "NDCHP is proud to have played a seminal role in the collaborative effort that has resulted in new funding for affordable, low income and special needs housing in North Dakota, especially in the oil- and flood-impacted areas of the state."

The State and Local Organizing Award recognizes an NLIHC member organization for outstanding achievement for organizing activity at the state or local level that furthers the mission of NLIHC.

The **Mass Alliance of HUD Tenants** (MAHT) was awarded NLIHC's first Resident Organizing Award for successfully encouraging U. S. Senator Scott Brown to support full funding for HUD rental housing programs, and helping to pass two amendments to the FY12 THUD Appropriations bill that will protect up to 80,000 families nationwide.

"MAHT taught us how to organize, brought me to Washington, and helped us win vouchers for our building. If it wasn't for MAHT, we'd be out on the street. It goes to show you that tenants can organize to save our homes," said Dave Horan of the Warran Hall Tenants Association in Brighton, MA in a statement prior to NLIHC's conference.

The Resident Organizing Award recognizes the outstanding organizing, empowerment and advocacy achievements of NLIHC member resident-led associations that further the mission of NLIHC.

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## 30TH NLIHC HOUSING LEADERSHIP AWARDS

### Senator Patty Murray and Outgoing NLIHC Board Chairman George Moses Honored

The National Low Income Housing Coalition held its 30th annual Housing Leadership Awards Reception on March 27 in Washington, DC. This year's honorees are Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) and George Moses, outgoing Chairman of the NLIHC Board of Directors.

Senator Murray received the Edward W. Brooke III Housing Leadership Award, named for former the Senator from MA and former Chairman of NLIHC Board, for her leadership on low income housing and the needs of homeless veterans in Congress. Sonya Campion, co-founder of the Campion Foundation, and Rachael Myers, Executive Director of the Washington Low Income Housing Alliance, an NLIHC state coalition partner, introduced the senator. In her remarks, Senator Murray said that establishing the National Housing Trust Fund was a great achievement and she hopes funding for it will be secured soon.

Honored with the Cushing Niles Dolbeare Lifetime Achievement Award was George Moses of Pittsburgh, PA. Mr. Moses, a member of the board of NLIHC for 12 years, has just retired from the board and as its chairman. Larry Swanson, Executive Director of ACTION-Housing Inc. of Pittsburgh, regaled the audience with stories of George as an advocate at home. Sheila Crowley, President and CEO of NLIHC, read excerpts from a letter of congratulations from Representative Mike Doyle (D-PA), a certificate of recognition from Senator Patrick Toomey (R-PA), and a tribute to Mr. Moses that Senator Bob Casey (D-PA) had entered into the Congressional Record.

In his remarks upon receiving the award named for the NLIHC founder Cushing Dolbeare, Mr. Moses told the story of the first time

he met Ms. Dolbeare. He recalled her sitting with him for an hour, explaining federal housing programs and what he needed to do to advocate for them. She then sent him on with instructions to go and teach others. Mr. Moses credited Ms. Dolbeare with inspiring his advocacy, and expressed his gratitude to his friends, family and fellow advocates for supporting his work.

The 30th Annual Housing Leadership Award Reception was hosted by The Home Depot Foundation. Kelly Caffarelli, President of the Foundation, brought greetings and described the foundation's three-year, \$30 million commitment to ensure that every veteran has a safe place to call home.

Bill Faith, honorary member of the NLIHC board, emceed the evening. He thanked the many donors who were listed in the event program and introduced the members of the Host Committee who had helped to raise the funds for NLIHC's sole fundraising event. They are Irene Basloe Saraf, Michael Bodaken, Dorli Bokel, Bonnie Caldwell, Gordon Cavanaugh, Greg Hettrick, Hal Keller, Bill Kelly, Michael Kelly, and Sister Lillian Murphy. The Host Committee was chaired by Marcie Cohen, a member of the NLIHC board, who Bill acknowledged for her excellent work on fundraising. The list of donors for 2012 can be found at the end of this issue of Memo.

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## BOARD OF DIRECTORS & STATE COALITIONS MEET

### Board of Directors Elections

At its meeting on March 23 in Washington, DC, the Board of Directors said farewell to three long time members who rotated off the board. George Moses, who held a state coalition position representing the Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania, completed his fourth three-year term on the board and his sixth one-year term as Chairman. Donald Chamberlain of Seattle, WA, who served as First Vice Chairman and Chairman of the Housing Plus Services Policy Committee, reached the end of the new term limit rule of three three-year terms, as did Chuck Elsesser. Chuck works for Florida Legal Services in Miami and served as Chairman of the Resident Issues Policy Committee, as well as Chairman of the Personnel Committee.

Five new members were elected to the board. Elected as at-large members were Christine Allamanno, Affordable Housing Project Staff Attorney, Gulf Coast Legal Services, St. Petersburg, FL; Emma Clifford, Executive Director, Oglala Sioux Tribe Partnership for Housing, Pine Ridge, SD; and Ann O'Hara, Associate Director, Technical Assistance Collaborative, Boston, MA. Filling vacant state coalition positions are Rachael Myers, Executive Director, Washington Low Income Housing Alliance, Seattle, WA; and Marla Newman, Executive Director, Louisiana Housing Alliance, Baton Rouge, LA.

Mark Allison and Maria Cabildo were elected to third three-year terms. Marcie Cohen, Matt Gerard, Greg Payne, Tara Rollins, and Leonard Williams were elected to second three-year terms.

Mark Allison of Albuquerque, NM was elected Chairman of the Board. Brenda Clement of Providence, RI was elected First Vice Chair and Leonard Williams of Buffalo, NY is the new Second Vice Chair. Greg Payne of Portland, ME and Moises Loza of Washington, D.C. were elected to serve again as Secretary and Treasurer, respectively. Lisa Hasegawa of Washington, D.C. will serve another year in an at-large position on the Executive Committee, joined by Linda Leaks of Washington, D.C. who was elected to an at-large position for the first time.

## State Coalitions Discuss How to Better Serve ELI Households at Semi-Annual Meeting

On March 25, representatives of 29 NLIHC state coalition partners gathered for their semi-annual meeting. Attending his first meeting was Steve Copley of Housing Arkansas, the newest NLIHC state coalition.

The meeting featured a discussion of what can be done with existing resources to serve more extremely low income households. Participants also learned about how to effectively use Twitter to generate media attention for their issues, were updated on federal policy issues and NLIHC's research agenda, and discussed ways to ensure that the mortgage settlement money to the states go into housing and not for other purposes, such as filling state budget gaps.

To learn more about NLIHC's State Coalition Project, visit [www.nlihc.org/whatwedo/outreach/state](http://www.nlihc.org/whatwedo/outreach/state), or contact La'Teashia Sykes at [lateashia@nlihc.org](mailto:lateashia@nlihc.org).

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## FEDERAL BUDGET

### House Passes Budget Resolution After Rejecting Alternative Budget Proposals

The House of Representatives passed H. Con. Res. 112, the FY13 House budget resolution, on March 29 after rejecting six budget resolution alternatives. This budget resolution would cut spending \$5 trillion below the Administration's FY13 budget request, lower taxes for higher income households, and decrease mandatory and discretionary spending for programs serving low income households (see Memo, 3/23). The House voted 228 to 191 in favor of the resolution, largely on party lines. Ten Republicans voted with all Democrats to oppose the resolution.

On March 28, three substitute amendments were offered and voted down. One was a bipartisan proposal from Representatives Jim Cooper (D-TN) and Steve LaTourette (R-OH) that was based on the Simpson-Bowles deficit reduction proposal (see Memo, 11/4/2011). Another, proposed by Representative Mick Mulvaney (R-SC), was based on the Congressional Budget Office's (CBO) analysis of the budget and would have increased budget authority, cut mandatory spending in place of the sequester planned for January 2013, and raise revenue from taxes.

A third, offered by the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), would have raised \$4 trillion in new revenue through closing tax loopholes, enacting a millionaire tax surcharge, and ending the mortgage interest deduction for second homes and yachts. The CBC would have increased funding for housing and community development programs by \$5 billion above the President's budget request, eliminated the sequester scheduled to begin in January 2013, and reduced the deficit by more than \$750 billion below the House budget resolution.

On March 29, the House again voted down three more substitute amendments. The first, put forth by the Republican Study Committee, would have cut spending nearly \$100 million below H. Con. Res. 112. The second, proposed by Democratic members of the Budget Committee, would have replaced sequestration by increasing revenue and making cuts only to specific programs.

The third, offered by the Congressional Progressive Caucus (CPC), would have raised revenue by limiting the benefit of the mortgage interest deduction, increasing tax rates for millionaires, allowing the Bush tax cuts to expire, implementing a progressive estate tax, eliminating tax cuts for oil, gas and coal companies, among other tax changes. The CPC budget would have prioritized funding for affordable housing, including the National Housing Trust Fund. The CPC describes investments in affordable housing as generating direct and indirect economic activity, reducing the cost to the government of homelessness and creating "long-term economic viability."

The standard procedure once the House passes a concurrent budget resolution is to send it to the Senate for agreement. Once a concurrent budget resolution has passed the Senate, the Committees on Appropriations are able to begin their work. If Congress does not pass a concurrent resolution by the statutory deadline of April 15, the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations are free to begin their appropriations work.

The Senate Committee on the Budget filed a resolution the week of March 19 reflecting the amount of FY13 funding agreed to in the Budget Control Act of 2011 (BCA) (see Memo, 3/23). Senate majority leader Harry Reid (D-NV) has said that Congress does not need to go through the traditional budget process as the BCA provides a statutory funding level for FY13 agreed to by both the House and Senate. By passing an FY13 budget resolution, the House is ignoring the funding levels enacted by the BCA.

After April 15, the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations can divide the amount of FY13 funding established by their respective budget resolutions, called the 302(a), among their 12 subcommittees. These amounts are the 302(b) allocations. The subcommittees that provide funds to for affordable housing are the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies subcommittee and the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies subcommittee. Once the 302(b) subcommittee allocations are established, the subcommittees will start crafting their appropriations bills for FY13. The 302(b) allocations for the House and Senate are expected to be announced sometime in mid-April, after Congress returns from recess for the first two weeks in April.

View the House budget resolution: [www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-112hconres112rh/pdf/BILLS-112hconres112rh.pdf](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-112hconres112rh/pdf/BILLS-112hconres112rh.pdf)

View the CBC proposal: <http://cdn.thecongressionalblackcaucus.com/wp-content/uploads/CBC-FY13-Budget-Amendment.pdf>

View the CPC proposal: <http://cpc.grijalva.house.gov/index.cfm?sectionid=81&sectiontree=5,81>

## House and Senate Programmatic Affordable Housing Requests Submitted

Many Representatives and Senators submitted FY13 programmatic funding requests in March to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations subcommittees that fund affordable housing programs (see Memo, 3/9, 3/16).

Members of the House wrote “dear colleague” letters to the House Committee on Appropriations subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies (THUD) requesting strong funding for a range of HUD programs including Tenant Based Rental Assistance, Project-Based Rental Assistance and Public Housing programs, Homeless Assistance, the HOME program, Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Vouchers, the Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS program, and the Fair Housing Initiatives program.

Dear colleague letters from members of the Senate in support of FY13 funding for HUD programs were written to the Chair and Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Appropriations THUD subcommittee on the Project-Based Rental Assistance program, the Homeless Assistance Grants, the HOME Investments Partnerships program, Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS program, the Fair Housing Initiatives program, the Lead Hazard program, the Section 202 and 811 programs, the Housing Counseling program, the Community Development Block Grant, the Sustainable Communities program, and the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative. Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) specifically requested funding for the NHTF and rural housing programs.

Members of the Senate also signed a dear colleague letter to the Chair and Ranking Member of the subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies in support of strong funding for the Department of Agriculture Rural Housing Service programs.

The House and Senate subcommittees will now consider these requests as they prepare to craft their appropriations bills for FY13.

View some of the final dear colleague letters with House and Senate signers at: <http://nlihc.org/article/house-and-senate-programmatic-affordable-housing-requests-submitted>

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## MORE CONGRESS

### House THUD Subcommittee Scrutinizes HUD Programs

The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies (THUD) held an oversight hearing on HUD and Department of Transportation (DOT) programs on March 29. Inspectors General (IG) from HUD and DOT as well as representatives of the Government Accountability Office (GAO) testified before the Subcommittee on outstanding management and oversight concerns for the two agencies.

HUD IG David Montoya shared concerns that HUD has not restored the statutorily required capital reserve rate of 2% for the Federal Housing Administration Mutual Mortgage Insurance Fund. He also reported that he does not think there are not adequate controls in place for the HOME Investment Partnerships program.

Subcommittee Chair Tom Latham (R-IA) questioned panelists about HUD’s auditing of the Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA), an agency reported to have units in poor condition and that spent its funds on uses other than operating and maintaining public housing. Mr. Montoya said that the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) had been concerned with the need for oversight of the PHA since 2004. He sees the PHA’s status as a Moving to Work (MTW) agency as a major factor contributing to the lack of oversight for the agency.

“The MTW program is designed to allow more flexibility in how a public housing authority can spend its money,” said Mr. Montoya. The Office of the Inspector General has “argued since 2004 that we didn’t have the confidence for Philadelphia to go under MTW,” he continued. Mr. Montoya said the financial flexibility granted to the agency through its MTW status allowed the PHA to use \$1.1 million of its funding to fight the oversight of the IG and to hire external legal counsel to shadow IG staff as they audited the PHA.

Matthew Scire of the GAO commented that the GAO inspectors were also shadowed by attorneys when performing audits. The

PHA “could have spent this money on housing instead of this type of frivolous spending,” said Mr. Montoya. Mr. Montoya said that the OIG has recommended that the HUD take the PHA off of the MTW program. The GAO is expected to release a report on the MTW program later this spring.

Ranking Member John Olver (D-MA) asked the HUD IG whether HUD has sufficient staff to provide oversight to the PHA. Mr. Montoya responded that removing the agency’s MTW status would be a good first step in responding to concerns expressed by the IG’s office since 2004.

Ranking Member Olver questioned witnesses on HUD’s information technology improvement plan. Witnesses from GAO and the IG expressed concerns that HUD’s improvements were not sufficient to date, despite plans to integrate five of HUD’s data systems.

Representative Charlie Dent (R-PA) questioned witnesses about HUD’s oversight of the HOME program. “HUD has historically agreed with 99%” of the IG’s recommendations on the HOME program, said Mr. Montoya. He said that HUD is developing new regulations for oversight in response to recent requests from Congress. Chairman Latham asked Mr. Montoya about the IG’s findings of deficiencies in HUD’s Integrated Disbursement Information System (IDIS) used for the HOME program. Mr. Montoya said that HUD has not agreed with the IG on this finding and so the IG has referred this finding to the GAO.

In his closing words, Chair Latham noted that the March 29 oversight hearing is the last that the Subcommittee will hold prior to Mr. Olver’s retirement at the end of the 112th Congress. Chair Latham thanked Ranking Member Olver saying, “You are a great partner and great to work with.”

View the testimony of the IG and GAO witnesses: <http://appropriations.house.gov/Files/?CatagoryID=34798>

## House Passes Veterans Legislation

The House of Representatives passed H.R. 3298, the “Homes for Heroes Act,” on March 27. The legislation, sponsored by Representative Al Green (D-TX), was approved by a vote of 414-5. The measure now awaits action in the Senate.

The measure would, among other provisions, create the position of Special Assistant for Veterans Affairs at HUD to improve coordination of housing services for veterans with the federal government. H.R. 3298 would also require an annual submission of the Supplemental Veterans Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) (see Memo, 11/4). While the Administration has submitted a Veterans AHAR for the past two years, it is not explicitly mandated to do so.

NLIHC submitted a letter in support of H.R. 3298 prior to its approval in Committee on December 8, 2011 (see Memo, 12/09/11).

The text of H.R. 3298 is available at: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-112hr3298eh/pdf/BILLS-112hr3298eh.pdf>

NLIHC’s letter of support for the legislation is available at: [http://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/NLIHC\\_HomesforHeroes\\_Ltr\\_12-6-11.pdf](http://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/NLIHC_HomesforHeroes_Ltr_12-6-11.pdf)

## Senate Holds Choice Neighborhoods Hearing

The Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Subcommittee on Housing, Transportation and Community Development held a March 27 hearing on S. 624, a bill that would authorize HUD’s Choice Neighborhoods Initiative (CNI) program. Subcommittee Chairman Robert Menendez (D-NJ) introduced S. 624 in March of 2011 (see Memo, 3/18/2011). CNI authorization has also been introduced in the House by Representative Maxine Waters (D-CA), H.R. 762 (see Memo, 2/18/2011). At HUD’s request, Congress appropriated CNI funding in FY10, FY11 and FY12, but the program has not been authorized by Congress.

Chairman Menendez opened the hearing, saying that CNI “embodies the best of HOPE VI” and adds integrated supports for residents, and attention to schools and jobs. He also said that CNI provides for the long-term viability of communities and families nationwide.

HUD Assistant Secretary for Public and Indian Housing Sandra Henriquez testified that the \$130 million of funding provided to HUD for CNI has been awarded to 35 communities as implementation and planning grants.

“We have heard from Public Housing Authority executive directors, mayors, and other leaders across the country that they need a tool that is sufficiently catalytic to revitalize these neighborhoods, and get their cities headed in the right direction. Existing funding sources like CDBG, HOME, LIHTC, and the Rental Assistance Demonstration can address some symptoms, but are simply not catalytic or substantial enough to effectively restore high-need neighborhoods,” Ms. Henriquez said in her written testimony. “Choice Neighborhoods is exactly the kind of tool that those local leaders are asking for, and it is currently helping change the trajectories of cities across the country,” Ms. Henriquez testified.

Maria Maio, representing the Jersey City Housing Authority, which received one of the first CNI planning grants, also testified. “Although the program has been funded in recent years through the appropriations process, CNI has lacked the critical legitimacy of an authorized program conferred through the regular order of Congress. The hearings today will begin to rectify that deficiency,” Ms. Maio testified. Responding to a question from Chairman Menendez, Ms. Maio referred to CNI as “HOPE VI on steroids.”

Susan Popkin of the Urban Institute testified that HOPE VI was less

successful in helping families improve their economic circumstances than it was in improving quality of housing and sense of safety of relocated residents, and that is was not a solution for the most vulnerable. She thinks CNI will need to provide services and support to help address the complex challenges “many of these families face in moving toward self-sufficiency.”

“HOPE VI was a housing intervention,” Ms. Popkin said, “with the hope that moving people somewhere else would have all these other benefits for families. I think the research we’ve done shows it’s much harder to move those kinds of outcomes for people who’ve been very disconnected from the labor market and are very sick in a lot of dimensions,” Ms. Popkin said.

Dr. Anthony B. Sanders, Distinguished Professor of Finance at George Mason and a Senior Scholar at the Mercatus Center, generally said that the CNI effort was too small. “The bill calls for \$350 million in 2012 for competitive grants to revitalize distressed neighborhoods. \$350 million spread over the U.S. for distressed neighborhoods is a drop in the bucket. Bear in mind that Stanford University recently built a business school campus for \$345 million,” Dr. Sanders testified. Dr. Sanders added in his written testimony that, “This Bill is a revision of the HOPE VI program that was less than a success. After billions of dollars have been spent, HOPE VI and this bill should focus on a better way to help the poor rather than ‘a lick of paint’ approach public housing.”

“A better way to help solve the problem,” Dr. Sanders said, “is to unleash the free market on housing. Taking a page from the President Reagan (and Democratic majority) playbook, we should use fiscal policy to increase the supply of clean, affordable housing by offering accelerated depreciation deductions on multifamily housing. This will increase the supply of housing without having to go through housing authorities and not-for-profits.”

Paul Weech represented the Housing Partnership Network at the hearing. Mr. Weech is also a board member of NLIHC. Mr. Weech testified in strong support of the bill and called out key attributes of CNI. He said that CNI expands the focus of HOPE VI beyond just public housing to include equally distressed properties under non-public ownership; that CNI allows local governments, nonprofits, and for-profit developers (in conjunction with the local government) to step into a lead development role where previously the lead grantee role on HOPE VI efforts was the sole province of public housing agencies; and that CNI requires and promotes even greater linkages and synergies between the redevelopment effort and other public systems that make a community successful and increase opportunities for low income residents.

Like others, Mr. Weech testified to the importance of CNI authorization, saying it would “provide a more predictable framework for the program. Choice Neighborhoods implicates many longstanding, difficult public policy issues. Affordable housing program design is often about choosing between place-based and

people-based strategies, about the sometimes competing desires to create mobility and choice for households to seek opportunity versus focusing on building communities of opportunity. Policy makers need to think through the challenges of balancing the positive impacts of new investment and regeneration on surrounding property values with the sometimes negative effects of rising rents and displacement through gentrification.”

Mr. Weech also called on Congress not to set aside CNI funds for one type of housing or one type of developer versus another. When funding HOPE VI, Congress has set aside some CNI funding just for public housing agencies, a nod to CNI funding replacing HOPE VI funding in the HUD budget and an acknowledgement of the significant backlog of public housing capital needs.

Egbert Perry, representing The Integral Group LLC, also testified in support of the CNI program. “Under Choice, there is a clear recognition that public housing projects are not the only distressed developments where despair and concentrations of social ills exist. In fact, in many communities, some of the other subsidized developments are in as bad a shape, or worse, than much of the public housing stock. Those developments are often responsible for retarding neighborhood recovery efforts,” Mr. Perry said in his written testimony.

The Subcommittee has not set a mark-up date for S. 624.

## Residual Receipts Bill Introduced

Representatives Erik Paulsen (R-MN) and Michael Grimm (R-NY) introduced legislation to amend the Low Income Housing Preservation and Resident Homeownership Act of 1990. The bill, H.R. 4253, would provide access to property residual receipts, the accumulated cash surplus that is over and above the allowable limited dividends provided to owners of certain affordable housing projects.

Today, the use of residual receipts at the end of the project’s contract term is governed by regulatory use agreements and is restricted to a small number of uses related to the project itself and to uses that benefit tenants. The bill would expand use of residual receipts by amending LIHPRHA, a 1990 to 1996 federal preservation program, and allowing use of the funds for potentially non-preservation purposes.

Introduced on March 22, the bill was referred to the House Committee on Financial Services.

## HUD

### HUD Extends RAD Comment Deadline to April 23

HUD sent an email to advocates informing them that the due date for comments regarding the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) will be extended to April 23, 2012, from April 9. A formal notice in the *Federal Register* will be published soon.

The FY12 Appropriations Act allows HUD to convert assistance provided for a limited number of units from public housing and three smaller private HUD-assisted housing programs to long-term, renewable, project-based Section 8 rental assistance or to project-based vouchers (see Memo, 11/18/11 and 3/9/12). The three smaller programs are Rent Supplement (Rent Supp), the Rental Assistance Program (RAP), and the Moderate Rehabilitation program (Mod Rehab).

## DOT

### NLIHC Signs Comment Letter Regarding Mass Transit Program

NLIHC signed on to a comment letter from fair housing advocates coordinated by the Poverty and Race Research Action Council (PRRAC) regarding the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA's) proposed revisions to the measures used to evaluate applications for New Starts transit program funds. FTA's New Starts program is the primary financial resource for new or extended locally-planned, implemented and operated transit capital investments for heavy or light commuter rail, as well as bus rapid transit.

The letter supported the proposed rulemaking, which would make significant changes to the criteria by which applications for transit projects will be evaluated. For the first time, two affordable housing factors would be considered when awarding transit money:

1. Policies in place to support the maintenance of or increase to the share of affordable housing in a transit project corridor.
2. The existence of publicly supported housing in the transit corridor.

These provisions would help to preserve existing affordable housing and increase development of additional affordable housing in the immediate vicinity of a newly funded transit stop. By including support for affordable housing, the FTA explicitly recognizes the important relationship between transportation and housing.

Fair housing advocates noted that FTA funds play a central role in urban development and in shaping housing patterns. How those funds are invested can determine whether low income people are

displaced and whether open housing opportunities are advanced, as required by the Fair Housing Act. The letter warned that the proposed criteria fall far short of providing for fair housing choice and urged FTA to explicitly condition funding by requiring applicants to demonstrate significant results in meeting civil rights and fair housing obligations under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, and the Department of Transportation's Environmental Justice Circular.

The letter is available at: [http://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/Civil\\_Rights\\_Comments\\_Ltr\\_on\\_FTA\\_New\\_Starts\\_3-26-12.pdf](http://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/Civil_Rights_Comments_Ltr_on_FTA_New_Starts_3-26-12.pdf)

Information about New Starts is at: [http://fta.dot.gov/12347\\_5221.html](http://fta.dot.gov/12347_5221.html)

## EVENTS

### Free Webinars For Residents of HUD Affordable Rental Housing

The National Housing Law Project (NHLP) will hold a series of webinars for residents of HUD affordable rental housing assistance, including public housing, vouchers, and project-based Section 8.

Five two-part, web-based trainings will provide:

1. An overview of HUD's rental housing programs.
2. Information about residents' rights to organize and participate in key decisions about their homes.
3. An explanation of rent calculations, including what does and does not count as tenant income.
4. Details about disability-related reasonable accommodation rights.
5. Tools residents can use to enforce their rights.

NHLP's Resident Training Academy will launch on April 10 and continue through July.

All sessions will be held at 6 pm ET.

Tenants, Resident Council members, local tenant advocates, and community organizers will all gain from the trainings. There are no training fees thanks to the support of the Herb Block Foundation. For more details go to the NHLP homepage at [www.nhlp.org](http://www.nhlp.org). Ask questions at [ResidentAcademy@nhlp.org](mailto:ResidentAcademy@nhlp.org) or call 415-546-7000 x3110.

The National Housing Law Project has the nation's top legal experts on the rights of residents in HUD's federally-assisted rental housing programs.

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## NLIHC STAFF

**Musadiq Bidar** Communications Intern, x250  
**Megan Bolton** Senior Research Analyst, x245  
**Elina Bravve** Research Analyst, x244  
**Sarah Brundage** Communications Associate, x246  
**Lauren Cartwright** Outreach/MSW Intern, x229  
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**Shannon Faulk** Executive Assistant, x224  
**Stephanie Foner** Policy Intern, x252  
**Ed Gramlich** Regulatory Director, x314  
**Patrice Guillory** Outreach Associate, x222  
**Elisha Harig-Blaine** State Coalition Project Director, x316  
**Mary Kolar** Outreach Associate x233  
**Sham Manglik** Policy Analyst, x243  
**Taylor Materio** Communications Consultant  
**Khara Norris** Director of Administration, x242  
**Melissa Quirk** Senior Policy Analyst, x230  
**Bill Shields** Vice President of Operations, x232  
**La'Teashia Sykes** Senior Outreach Associate, x247  
**Girma Syoume** Research Intern, x249  
**Kate Traynor** Research Intern, x223

## ABOUT NLIHC

The National Low Income Housing Coalition is dedicated solely to achieving equitable federal policy that assures affordable, accessible, and healthy homes for the people with the lowest incomes in the United States.

Established in 1974 by Cushing N. Dolbeare, NLIHC educates, organizes, and advocates to ensure decent, affordable housing within healthy neighborhoods for everyone.

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## TELL YOUR FRIENDS!

NLIHC membership is the best way to stay informed about affordable housing issues, keep in touch with advocates around the country, and support NLIHC's work.

NLIHC membership information is available at [www.nlihc.org/join](http://www.nlihc.org/join). You can also e-mail us at [outreach@nlihc.org](mailto:outreach@nlihc.org) or call 202-662-1530 to request membership materials to distribute at meetings and conferences.



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