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Fair Housing

HUD's Proposed AFFH Rule Is Not a Fair Housing Rule

HUD's new proposal to gut the 2015 Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) rule represents a complete retreat from efforts to undo historic, government-driven patterns of housing discrimination and segregation throughout the U.S. The proposal underscores Secretary Carson's fundamental misunderstanding or willful misreading of the Fair Housing Act and its obligations. His proposal would allow communities to ignore the essential racial desegregation obligations of fair housing law and is the latest of Secretary Carson's attempts to weaken and disrupt HUD's fair housing duties.

NLIHC, the National Housing Law Project, and other partners are leading an effort to oppose HUD's proposed AFFH rule through the *Fight For Housing Justice* campaign. Advocates can learn more, leave comments, access talking points and other resources, and catch up on news at: <https://www.fightforhousingjustice.org>

HUD posted an [advance version](#) of its proposed replacement of the 2015 Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) rule on January 7. The formal *Federal Register* version is scheduled to be published on Tuesday, January 14. Comments will be due in 60 days. The proposed rule is not a fair housing rule. It considers housing that might be "affordable" to be the same as housing that is available to people in the Fair Housing Act's protected classes based on race, color, national origin, sex, familial status, disability, or religion. Based on a misguided supply-side ideology, the proposed rule falsely assumes an overall increase in the supply of housing will trickle down to become "affordable" without any consideration of a jurisdiction's policies and practices affecting people in the protected classes or any focus on overcoming historic patterns of housing segregation created by discriminatory federal housing policies in the first place.

The proposed rule would be worse than the minimal AFFH process that existed from 1994 to 2015, which the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found to be ineffective. The Obama administration issued a new AFFH rule in 2015 that provided jurisdictions clearer guidance and criteria for meeting their Fair Housing Act AFFH obligations and a set of tools to use to develop and implement plans to undo entrenched patterns of housing segregation.

HUD prematurely suspended implementation of the 2015 rule based on only 49 initial Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH) submissions, 32 of which were ultimately accepted by HUD. Contrary to HUD's claims, the 2015 rule was not prescriptive; it did not force jurisdictions to adhere to set issues or solutions. The 2015 rule gave jurisdictions the flexibility to identify their own fair housing issues and develop their own priorities and methods for taking action to address them.

NLIHC president and CEO Diane Yentel commented in a [January 7 statement](#), "HUD should abandon this ill-conceived proposal, reinstitute the 2015 AFFH rule, and resume its implementation."

A New AFFH Certification Demonstrates the Supply-Side Approach

The proposed rule discards a genuine means to affirmatively further fair housing as required by the Fair Housing Act of 1968. The rule scraps the 2015 rule's Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH) that was the product of nearly four years' of diligent consultation and broad public engagement on the part of HUD starting in late-2009. The AFH was developed in response to jurisdictions' requests for uniform guidance in order to reduce uncertainty regarding how to meet their AFFH obligations.

In place of the AFH, HUD proposes a newly designed "AFFH certification" that reflects HUD's equating an increased supply of housing with fair housing choice. Simply increasing the supply of market-rate housing will not, however, necessarily result in housing affordable to low-income - much less extremely low-income -

people, and it is even less likely to reduce or eliminate discriminatory attitudes, policies, and practices or entrenched segregation.

For the AFFH certification, HUD would require a jurisdiction to identify three goals and describe how addressing those goals would address fair housing. The proposed rule would not, however, require such a description if a jurisdiction chose its goals from a list of 16 “obstacles” that HUD considers inherent barriers to fair housing choice. The effect of the exemptions is to steer a jurisdiction toward choosing the “obstacles,” 13 of which have nothing to do with fair housing; rather, they are factors that might affect the cost of building housing and thereby might inhibit growth of the supply of housing.

“Obstacles” include the time it takes for title clearance, construction-approval procedures, construction-permitting procedures, design standards, and building codes. Addressing another “obstacle,” tax policies, might harm local and state housing trust funds. Additional “obstacles” - such as rent control, labor protections, energy and water efficiency policies, and wetland and environmental rules - protect people and the environment.

A New HUD Evaluation Process Does Not Measure AFFH

HUD would evaluate a jurisdiction’s compliance with its obligation to affirmatively further fair housing by assessing the extent to which the jurisdiction’s efforts measure up based on nine factors, only two of which relate to fair housing choice. Two factors relate to housing supply, two to affordability, and three to quality. Assessing a jurisdiction on the basis of these nine factors will not provide a genuine measure of its success at achieving its AFFH obligation.

Contrary to HUD’s false claims that the 2015 rule did not take into account the unique fair housing circumstances facing individual jurisdictions, the proposed rule would rate and compare jurisdictions based on their nine-factor evaluations. Arbitrarily rating or ranking jurisdictions using the nine factors is a meaningless exercise that cannot truly gauge the success of any jurisdiction’s compliance with its AFFH obligations.

Jurisdictions that HUD ranks as “Outstanding” would be eligible for preference points when competing for grants through Notices of Funding Availability (NOFAs), ostensibly an incentive for jurisdictions to better perform their AFFH obligations. But few HUD programs operate via NOFAs, and most of these are relatively small programs. High ranking jurisdictions are likely to be those that readily strive to genuinely comply with their obligation to affirmatively further fair housing, so would not need these incentives. Jurisdictions that attempt to avoid complying with AFFH are not at all likely to be motivated by the marginal benefits of points awarded in a NOFA competition.

Public Participation in the AFFH Process Greatly Diminished

The proposed rule would eliminate the 2015 rule’s separate public participation process that required a public hearing and written comment period to inform a jurisdiction about its residents’ fair housing concerns and priorities before any AFFH-related considerations might be reflected in a jurisdiction’s Consolidated Plan (ConPlan), which is focused on housing and community development needs. Identifying fair housing issues, assessing priorities among many fair housing issues, and recommending fair housing goals and actions entail very different concepts and sometimes even different stakeholders than the ConPlan process, thereby warranting separate public participation procedures.

Public Housing Agencies’ Requirements Greatly Reduced

Public housing agencies (PHAs) would not have to have an AFFH certification listing AFFH goals. The proposed rule would eliminate the 2015 rule’s requirement of PHAs to take “meaningful actions” and to not take actions inconsistent with the obligation to affirmatively further fair housing. A PHA would merely have to consult with its jurisdiction on how the two could satisfy their common AFFH obligations.

The advanced version of the proposed AFFH rule is at: <https://bit.ly/2t2YOnZ>

A detailed NLIHC summary and analysis is at: <https://bit.ly/39Wrsbc>

Diane Yentel's January 7 media statement is at: <https://bit.ly/303vpX7>

More about AFFH is in NLIHC's *2019 Advocates' Guide*, [pages 7-14](#), [7-21](#), and [7-26](#)

Senator Brown and Representative Waters Criticize HUD's Proposed AFFH Rule

Senate Banking Committee Ranking Member Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and House Financial Services Committee Chair Maxine Waters (D-CA) each issued statements on January 8 condemning the Trump administration's proposal to replace the 2015 Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) rule. Both leaders characterize the proposal as a weakening of the current rule as part of the administration's efforts to dismantle fair housing enforcement and protections.

"Instead of working to identify and overcome patterns of housing segregation and inequality, the Trump Administration pretends they don't exist," said Senator Brown in his statement. "Secretary Carson must stop undermining HUD's oversight of communities' fair housing efforts and should not move forward with this rule."

"This proposed Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) rule is yet another attack on fair housing protections that will be detrimental to all people, including minorities, women, families with children, and persons with disabilities," said Chair Waters in her press release. "President Trump and Secretary Carson have made it clear through a series of actions that their priority is to roll back the clock on civil rights by declaring war on fair housing and efforts to foster more inclusive communities."

NLIHC, the National Housing Law Project, and other partners are leading an effort to oppose this new rule through the *Fight For Housing Justice* campaign. Advocates can submit comments, access talking points and other resources, and catch up on news at: <https://www.fightforhousingjustice.org>

Read Ranking Member Brown's statement at: <https://bit.ly/2QDIRxO>

Read Chair Waters's statement at: <https://bit.ly/3a3F7gK>

Learn more about the AFFH rule at: <https://www.fightforhousingjustice.org>

Our Homes, Our Votes: 2020

Full-Page Ad in *Des Moines Register*: Over 1,000 Organizations Call for Presidential Debate Moderators to Ask About Affordable Housing

Yesterday, today and tomorrow in Iowa's preeminent newspaper, *The Des Moines Register*, a full page ad calls on the moderators of the January 14 presidential debate to ask the candidates a question on affordable housing and homelessness. The *Our Homes, Our Votes: 2020* partners NLIHC and the Polk County Housing Trust Fund reprinted a [letter](#) signed by over 1,000 organizations and also sent the letter to the debate moderators calling for a question during the debate in Des Moines.

Six 2020 Democratic presidential candidates will take to the national stage in Des Moines tomorrow for a televised debate hosted by *CNN* and *The Des Moines Register*. The debate provides an opportunity for the candidates at the debate - Vice President Joe Biden, Mayor Pete Buttigieg, Tom Steyer, and U.S. Senators Amy Klobuchar, Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren - to explain how they would address the increasing homelessness and dire shortage of affordable homes in America.

Lauren Johnson, director of communications and community outreach for the Polk County Housing Trust Fund - a partner of NLIHC's on [Our Homes, Our Votes 2020](#) - explained why it is critical for the candidates to address affordable housing while in Iowa: "When people think about the affordable housing crisis, they often don't think too much about Iowa. However, those who live here see the same national issues on the ground - a rise in homelessness, the increasing cost of rent, and a substantial gap between white and African American homeownership in the City of Des Moines. To put an end to this crisis in Des Moines and across the country, we will need strong leadership and substantial federal investment. It is imperative that the candidates have the opportunity to discuss how they'll tackle these big issues on the debate stage in Des Moines this week."

Join NLIHC and *Our Homes, Our Votes: 2020* in calling on the candidates to talk about affordable housing at the debate! All of these candidates with the exception of Vice President Biden have released robust affordable plans, and voters want to hear the candidates discuss their solutions during the debates.

Follow @OurHomesVotes on Twitter for additional content to share and retweet, and use #OurHomesOurVotes2020 for all your affordable housing-related presidential election tweeting!

For information on all the presidential candidates' positions on affordable housing, go to: <https://www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org/>

Join Today's #OurHomesOurVotes2020 Pre-Presidential Debate Tweetstorm, 3:00 p.m. ET

Six candidates will take the stage for the sixth Democratic presidential debate tomorrow night. All but one of the candidates participating in the debate have released plans or proposals to address the nation's growing housing affordability crisis. Let's start the New Year with a bang and ensure the presidential debate moderators ask the candidates about their proposed solutions to the housing crisis facing millions!

Join NLIHC and *Our Homes, Our Votes: 2020* partners on Monday, January 13 at 3:00 p.m. ET (2 p.m. CT/1 p.m. MT/12 a.m. PT) for a tweetstorm urging the debate moderators to ask about affordable housing and homelessness!

NLIHC sent a letter—signed by over 1,000 organizations—to the *CNN* and *Des Moines Register* debate moderators calling on them to ask a question on one of the most pressing issues facing millions of voters - housing affordability. Read more [here](#) - and reference the letter in your tweets during the tweetstorm!

Sample tweets are listed below. Sample images to be used in your tweets can be downloaded at: <http://bit.ly/306ww8v>

.@wolfblitzer #DYK that 60% of people in the U.S. say housing affordability is a serious problem in the area where they live? Ask what would the candidates do about it as president? #DemDebates #OurHomesOurVotes2020

.@abbydphillip #DYK that 8 in 10 people in the U.S. think the pres. & Congress should take major action to make housing more affordable for low-income households? Ask what would the candidates do as president? #DemDebates #OurHomesOurVotes2020

.@brianneDMR #DYK that 76% of the public says it's harder today to find stable housing compared to previous generations? Ask what would the candidates do to address this issue as president?
#DemDebates #OurHomesOurVotes2020

.@wolfblitzer @abbydphillip @brianneDMR Over three quarters of people say they are more likely to vote for a candidate w/ a detailed plan to address the nation's affordable housing crisis. Ask the candidates what they would do at #DemDebates #OurHomesOurVotes2020

.@JoeBiden We look forward to hearing more about your plan to increase funding for housing for formerly incarcerated individuals. Talk about it and your other #affordablehousing solutions at the next #DemDebates! #OurHomesOurVotes2020

.@JoeBiden Over 1,000 organizations want to hear about how you would address the nation's affordable housing crisis. Tell us at the #DemDebates. Check it out <https://bit.ly/2P5vupb>
#OurHomesOurVotes2020

.@JoeBiden 8 in 10 people in the U.S. think the pres. & Congress should take major action to make housing more affordable for low-income households? Tells us at the #DemDebates what you'd do!
#OurHomesOurVotes2020

.@PeteButtigieg We want to hear more about your plan to invest \$170B in the national Housing Trust Fund for #affordablehousing for families with the greatest needs. Talk about it at the next #DemDebates #OurHomesOurVotes2020

.@PeteButtigieg We look forward to hearing more about how you plan to expand federal protections against eviction for low-income renters. Talk about it during the next #DemDebates!
#OurHomesOurVotes2020

.@PeteButtigieg Over three quarters of people say they are more likely to vote for a candidate w/ a detailed plan to address the nation's affordable housing crisis. Tell us at the #DemDebates about yours!
#OurHomesOurVotes2020

.@BernieSanders We look forward to hearing more on how you plan to prioritize 25k National Affordable Housing Trust Fund units in the first year to house the homeless. Talk about it during the next #DemDebates! #OurHomesOurVotes2020

.@BernieSanders We want to hear more about your housing plan to address homelessness and the lack of #affordablehousing during the next #DemDebates! #OurHomesOurVotes2020

.@BernieSanders 60% of people in the U.S. say housing affordability is a serious problem in the area where they live? Tell us at the #DemDebates what you'd do about it! #OurHomesOurVotes2020

.@EWarren We look forward to hearing more on how you plan to expand the Housing Trust Fund and to remove barriers to #affordablehousing during the next #DemDebates #OurHomesOurVotes2020

.@EWarren We want to hear more about your housing plan and how you plan to ensure compliance with the Fair Housing Act during the next #DemDebates! #OurHomesOurVotes2020

.@EWarren Over 1,000 organizations want to hear about how you would address the nation's affordable housing crisis. Tell us at the #DemDebates. Check it out <https://bit.ly/2P5vupb>
#OurHomesOurVotes2020

.@AmyKlobuchar We're looking forward to hearing about your plan to strengthen rural rental assistance and invest in the Housing Trust Fund to help millions of Americans struggling to cover rent. Talk about it on the #DemDebates stage! #OurHomesOurVotes2020

.@AmyKlobuchar We want to hear more about your plan to invest \$40B in the national Housing Trust Fund for #affordablehousing for rural areas, Indian country and families with the greatest needs. Talk about it during the next #DemDebates! #OurHomesOurVotes2020

.@AmyKlobuchar 76% of the public says it's harder today to find stable housing compared to previous generations? Tell us at the #DemDebates what you would do about it! #OurHomesOurVotes2020

.@TomSteyer Over 1000 organizations and millions of voters will be waiting to hear how you will address the nation's #affordablehousing crisis at the #DemDebates. Check it out <https://bit.ly/2P5vupb> #OurHomesOurVotes2020

.@TomSteyer We want to hear more about your housing plan to invest \$47B into the national Housing Trust Fund to serve the lowest-income households. Tell us about it at the #DemDebates! #OurHomesOurVotes2020

@TomSteyer We're looking forward to hearing about your plan to increase rental assistance for low-income people at the #DemDebates. #OurHomesOurVotes2020

Follow @OurHomesVotes on Twitter for additional content to share and retweet and use #OurHomesOurVotes2020 for all your housing-related presidential election tweeting!

For information on all the presidential candidates' positions on affordable housing, go to: <https://www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org/>

“Third Thursdays at Three” Webinar/Podcast Series: Elevate Housing as an Election Issue and Increase Low-Income Renter Voter Participation

NLIHC continues to engage housing justice advocates and leaders throughout the country to prepare for robust voter and candidate engagement initiatives in 2020. Candidates will address rental housing affordability when low-income renters and their allies turn out to vote in large numbers. **It's not too early** to think about how your organization can help elevate affordable housing policy through the election and to engage low-income renters in voting. [Sign up](#) for NLIHC's free “Third Thursdays at Three” webinar/podcast series to learn how.

NLIHC's nonpartisan *Our Homes, Our Votes: 2020* project provides training and resources to resident leaders, housing providers, social service professionals, community organizers, and others on all the key aspects of effective voter and candidate engagement activities. The “Third Thursdays at Three” webinar and podcast series is a 15-part effort to explore best practices, new ideas, and legal considerations for 501(c)(3) nonpartisan election engagement on issues such as voter registration, candidate engagement, election education, and getting out the vote.

[Register here for the Third Thursdays at Three series!](#)

The next session on January 16 at 3:00 p.m. ET is on “Voter Registration: finding and registering residents of subsidized housing.”

Previous sessions on legal considerations for nonprofits, creating an effective plan for voter engagement, helpful tools and partners for election engagement, and voter registration messaging, events and canvassing are available at: <https://bit.ly/338Ydho>

The upcoming webinars and podcasts are:

Session 5: *Voter Registration Part 2 – Finding and registering residents of subsidized housing*, Thursday, January 16 at 3:00 p.m. ET

This session will discuss the best ways to make sure voter registration campaigns are finding the people who are not yet registered and focusing efforts in the right places. Key features of the discussion will include best practices for identifying targeted populations; working voter registration into day-to-day operations at service agencies, libraries, and community centers; and accessing locked apartment buildings that are common in low-income areas. This session will be especially helpful for resident councils and associations eager to target new residents. We will also provide an overview of the mapping tools in the National Housing Preservation Database.

Session 6: *The role of housing providers in registering and mobilizing voters*, Thursday, February 20 at 3:00 p.m. ET

This session includes a review of how housing providers can register and mobilize their residents, with specific considerations for public housing agencies (PHAs) and operators of Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) housing. Presenters will also explore ideas on how PHAs can conduct voter registration with Housing Choice Voucher households that are often harder to connect with during registration drives because the households are scattered.

Session 7: *Getting candidates on the record*, Thursday, March 19 at 3:00 p.m. ET

This session is an exploration of the most common methods to get candidates for office on the record with their ideas for housing solutions. Candidate questionnaires and legal considerations will be explored along with tips on maximizing response rates from candidates. Presenters will also discuss effective candidate intercepts and asking questions in town hall meetings. Practices such as providing question cards and training volunteers to attend candidate events are effective and common and will be highlighted. The discussion will feature ideas for social media engagement and conventional media op-eds and letters to the editor (LTE) responses as methods to urge candidates to go on the record.

Session 8: *Educating voters*, Thursday, April 16 at 3:00 p.m. ET

A registered voter is most valuable as an informed voter. Voter education is the second step in a complete voter engagement campaign. Educating voters on the mechanics of voting is key and providing logistical information on polling locations and dates is critically important as well. There are specific considerations for electronic voting machines and ID requirements that voters must be aware of. Educating voters on their rights is also essential. This discussion will dive into information regarding provisional ballots and voter intimidation hotlines. Beyond logistics, voters often should be informed on the positions of candidates. Assembling and distributing a voter guide can be cumbersome and legally tricky, but highly effective. Presenters will explore best practices.

Session 9: *Housing issues and ballot initiatives*, Thursday, May 21 at 3:00 p.m. ET

In communities throughout the country, voters are showing more leadership on housing issues than elected officials. Twenty-two ballot initiatives on housing affordability issues passed in 2018, and more are expected in 2020. Taking issues directly to the voters can be an expensive and broad undertaking, but it often produces

strong results. This session will discuss how to get items placed on the ballot through the legislative process or through signature gathering. Presenters will discuss what works best in ballot-initiative campaigns and building broad support prior to an election.

Session 10: *Overcoming common obstacles to voting*, Thursday, June 18 at 3:00 p.m. ET

Low-income renters often are disproportionately impacted by common barriers to voting such as prior felony convictions, disabilities and inaccessible polling locations, and language barriers. This session will review laws governing these common obstacles and will discuss best tactics for overcoming them.

Session 11: *The challenge of voting while homeless*, Thursday, July 16 at 3:00 p.m. ET

This session explores best practices for homeless shelters and outreach agencies increasing registration and mobilization for people who do not have addresses. As the National Coalition for the Homeless has always said, “You don’t need a home to vote,” but there can be confusion among election officials on how best to register someone with no address and how to assign them to a polling location.

Session 12: *Voter Mobilization Part 1 – Early voting and vote-by-mail*, Thursday, August 20 at 3:00 p.m. ET

More and more votes each year are cast before Election Day, providing voter engagement campaigns with a longer window to get out the vote (GOTV). This session will review how to best maximize early voting opportunities and increase voter turnout in states with expanded vote-by-mail options.

Session 13: *Voter Mobilization Part 2 – Protecting low-income people from voter intimidation and voter caging tactics*, Thursday, September 17 at 3:00 p.m. ET

Presenters will explore community efforts to staff polling locations with well-trained volunteers to protect against intimidation efforts. Ultimately, educating voters in advance about going to the polls even if they have been told their registration is not current is the best practice, along with ensuring that everyone casts at least a provisional ballot. The discussion will also highlight the importance of establishing relationships with election officials who monitor polling locations in advance of Election Day.

Session 14: *Election Day! Getting out the vote*, Thursday, October 15 at 3:00 p.m. ET

Presenters will review the most effective Election Day tactics such as coordinating rides to the polls, hosting “walk to the polls” groups in low-income housing communities with nearby polling locations, using snacks and music to keeping people in line at busy polling locations, and deploying Election Day visibility volunteers with signs to remind people to vote. The discussion will also explore effective “knock-and-drag” efforts throughout Election Day for identifying who has not yet voted and sending volunteers to their doors.

Session 15: *After the Vote—Holding candidates to their promises*, Thursday, November 19 at 3:00 p.m. ET

Once the election is over, it’s important to hold candidates to their promises. Learn how to track the success of your voter turnout efforts to demonstrate to newly-elected officials that low-income renters are an important and active constituency. Presenters will discuss the best ways to constructively remind elected officials of their campaign promises while establishing relationships with new staff members.

Don’t miss these important training opportunities. Put “Third Thursdays at Three” in your calendar and register for the presentation series today.

Congress

House Financial Services Committee to Hold Hearing on Affordable Housing Crisis

The House Financial Services Committee will hold a hearing on January 14 at 10:00 a.m. ET, “On the Brink of Homelessness: How the Affordable Housing Crisis and the Gentrification of America Is Leaving Families Vulnerable.” The hearing will be held in 2128 Rayburn Office Building.

Witnesses are:

- Karen Chapple, professor and chair of the Department of City and Regional Planning, University of California, Berkley
- Matthew Desmond, Maurice P. Durning professor of Sociology & director of the Eviction Lab, Princeton University
- Priya Jayachandran, president, National Housing Trust
- Jeffrey Williams, tenant advocate

Learn more about the hearing and watch the livestream at: <https://bit.ly/2TdL3gT>

NLIHC Housing Policy Forum 2020

NLIHC Housing Policy Forum 2020 to Feature “Capitol Hill Insiders Panel”

A “**Capitol Hill Insiders Panel**” will be a featured session at NLIHC’s Housing Policy Forum 2020: *Ending Homelessness and Housing Poverty* taking place in Washington, DC, March 25-27, 2020. Register today for the 2020 Policy Forum featuring sessions and workshops on this and many other topics at:

<https://bit.ly/2ofWibO>. Please note that **the deadline for NLIHC low-income member hotel and lodging scholarships is January 15**. Apply for scholarships at: <https://bit.ly/2pJKij6>



The bipartisan Capitol Hill insider panel of senior congressional staff will address the state of play in Congress leading up to the 2020 elections in a year of impeachment proceedings and other turmoil on Capitol Hill. What does it all mean for affordable housing and homelessness funding, housing finance reform, housing-related tax credit proposals, and more? What are the emerging threats and opportunities in 2020 and beyond. Confirmed and invited speakers for this session include:

- **Beth Cooper**, Senate Banking Committee, Ranking Member Sherrod Brown (D-OH)
- **Matt Jones**, Senate Banking Committee, Chairman Mike Crapo (R-ID)
- **Esther Kahng**, House Financial Services Committee, Chairwoman Maxine Waters (D-CA)
- **Joe Carlile**, House Appropriations Committee, Chairman David Price (D-NC)

The Policy Forum will feature a wide array of other topics, including the current state of affordable housing in America – the opportunities and threats; promoting healthy homes; mobilizing against attacks to housing opportunities; creating and sustaining multi-sector housing coalitions, racial equity in housing; the bold policy proposals being advanced by 2020 presidential candidates and congressional leaders and how to move them forward; the YIMBY movement; Capitol Hill insights; affordable housing messaging and narrative change; the latest research on ending homelessness; NLIHC’s *Our Homes, Our Votes* nonpartisan voter and candidate engagement project; resident-led movements; state and local affordable housing solutions; redesigning disaster housing recovery; rural and native housing; state and local organizing best practices; and more.

When: The Forum will begin for most participants (see note about special Resident sessions below) on Wednesday, March 25 at 1:00 pm, with a welcoming reception later that evening and a full day of sessions on Thursday, March 26. Capitol Hill Day will take place on Friday, March 27, and will kick off with a preparatory session and a light breakfast at a location near Capitol (for those planning to make congressional visits).

Additional Sessions for Low-Income Residents: The 2020 Housing Policy Forum will offer a special extended session for low-income residents, doubling from previous years the time for workshops geared specifically to residents – providing more time for resident-specific learning and an opportunity to interact with NLIHC state partners. NLIHC will offer additional resident sessions starting on Tuesday, March 24, at 2:00 p.m., including a dinner with state partners that evening. The special resident sessions will continue on Wednesday, March 25 at 8:30 a.m. prior to the full Forum start at 1:00 p.m.

Resident Member Scholarship Application Deadline is January 15: A limited number of shared-lodging hotel scholarships will be awarded on a first-come-first-served basis to low-income residents who are NLIHC members and who pay their own Forum registration fee. Scholarships will be awarded to ensure a broad geographic distribution. Apply for a scholarship online at <https://bit.ly/2pJKij6> or fill out and send a fillable PDF at: <https://bit.ly/2qGmRrj> by **January 15!**

Housing Leadership Awards 2020: The 2020 NLIHC Housing Leadership Awards Reception will take place on Thursday, March 26, 2020 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., also at the Washington Court Hotel. A separate registration fee is required to attend the Leadership Awards event. (See related article in this *Memo to Members and Partners*.)

Hotel Reservations: NLIHC has a room block at discounted rates at the Washington Court Hotel where the Forum will take place. Reserve a room at <https://bit.ly/32GOAXb> or call 800-321-3010 or 202-628-2100 and ask for the NLIHC rate. Rooms are limited, so register early. The cutoff is March 6, 2020.

Register for the 2020 NLIHC Housing Policy Forum [today!](#)

NLIHC Housing Leadership Awards

Honor Shauna Sorrells with 2020 Housing Leadership Award Donation to NLIHC

NLIHC will posthumously honor **Shauna Sorrells**, former NLIHC board member and chief operating officer at the Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County, with the Edward W. Brooke Housing Leadership Award. Shauna died tragically on September 28, 2019. Shauna will be recognized at the [38th Annual Housing Leadership Awards Reception](#) on Thursday, March 26, 2020 at the Washington Court Hotel in Washington, DC. Make a contribution in Shauna's honor today as an [organization](#) or [individual](#). Register to attend at: <https://bit.ly/362lyDf>



Shauna Sorrells

Shauna Sorrells committed her professional life to public and affordable housing, striving to improve the lives of low-income people, particularly children. In 2002, she began working at HUD and quickly rose in the agency to the position of director of the Office of Public Housing Programs. Shauna received several HUD Departmental recognitions, including four Secretarial Awards from Secretaries Jackson, Preston and Donovan, as well as an Assistant Secretary's Distinguished Service Award for exceptional efforts. Most recently Shauna served as the chief operating officer for the Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County, where she continued to work to address homelessness and housing poverty in Maryland. She was an executive committee member of the NLIHC board of directors, and she also served on the board of directors of NAHRO and Homes for America.

The other 2020 Housing Leadership Awards honorees will be **Jennifer Leimaile Ho**, commissioner of Minnesota Housing and former senior advisor at HUD and deputy director of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), who will be honored with the 2020 Sheila Crowley Housing Justice Award; and **Bill Faith**, executive director of the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio (COHHIO) and former NLIHC board chair, who will be presented the 2020 Cushing Dolbeare Lifetime Service Award, named for NLIHC's founder and early leader of the modern affordable homes movement.

Recognize these outstanding individuals by making a donation to NLIHC in their honor!

Donate as an individual at: <https://bit.ly/34ng1FP>
Donate as an organization at: <https://bit.ly/2WyFnOb>

Your donation will be recognized in the Leadership Awards Reception program. The contribution will support NLIHC's mission to achieve socially just public policy to ensure the lowest-income people have decent, affordable homes.

The 2020 Leadership Awards Reception will be held on the second evening of NLIHC's 2020 Housing Policy Forum: *Ending Homelessness & Housing Poverty* taking place March 25-27, 2020. Register for the Forum at: <https://bit.ly/2PutSGn> and/or Leadership Awards Reception at: <https://bit.ly/362lyDf>

Opportunity Starts at Home

National Women's Law Center Joins Steering Committee of *Opportunity Starts at Home*

[The National Women's Law Center](#) (NWLC) announced on January 7 that it is joining the [Opportunity Starts at Home](#) multi-sector affordable homes Steering Committee. NWLC is the latest addition to the campaign's [Steering Committee](#), comprised of 18 national organizations from the housing, education, health, civil rights, anti-hunger, anti-poverty, criminal justice, child welfare, municipal governance, and faith-based sectors.

NWLC is an organization of advocates, experts, and lawyers who fight for gender justice in the courts, public policy, and society. It focuses on a range of issues with a mission to change culture and drive solutions for vulnerable populations, especially those who face multiple forms of discrimination, such as women of color and low-income women and families. NWLC joined the campaign because gender equity demands access to safe, decent, and affordable housing in which women can thrive.



“Affordable housing is the linchpin for attaining the health, dignity, and safety of women and their families,” said Fatima Goss Graves, president and CEO of NWLC. “This is why housing is a gender justice issue. When women face housing discrimination or are steered to low-opportunity areas or high-cost loans, it jeopardizes their families’ financial future and ability to build wealth. Without affordable housing, other basic needs—like access to good jobs and schools, high quality and affordable childcare, and the availability of healthy foods—are beyond reach.”

Read NWLC's full press release at: <https://bit.ly/35APOUu>

Follow the *Opportunity Starts at Home* campaign on all social media platforms: [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [LinkedIn](#). Be sure to [sign up](#) for our e-newsletter to get the latest updates about the campaign, including new multi-sector partners, [calls to action](#), events, and [research](#).

Attend January 16 National Press Club Event on ‘Broadening the Movement’!

Be sure to attend “Broadening the Movement: Housing as a National Priority in 2020,” an [Opportunity Starts at Home](#) multi-sector affordable homes campaign [event](#) at the National Press Club in Washington DC on January 16 from 1:00 to 2:30 p.m. ET. The event will feature CEOs and other leaders from the National League of Cities, the National Women's Law Center, JustLeadershipUSA, Catholic Charities, Children's Healthwatch, and NLIHC.

Safe, decent, accessible, and affordable housing must be made a top national priority in 2020, as voters go to the polls to choose presidential nominees and the next president and decisions are made about 2021 investment priorities. Powerful new constituencies are mobilizing to call for bold solutions to housing poverty and homelessness in America.

The event will feature the following leaders from the *Opportunity Starts at Home* campaign's multi-sector Steering Committee:

- Clarence E. Anthony, CEO and executive director, National League of Cities
- Fatima Goss Graves, president and CEO, National Women's Law Center
- DeAnna Hoskins, president and CEO, JustLeadershipUSA
- Sister Donna Markham, president and CEO, Catholic Charities USA
- Dr. Megan Sandel, MD MPH, principal investigator with Children's HealthWatch and associate professor of pediatrics at Boston University
- Diane Yentel, president and CEO, National Low Income Housing Coalition
- Mike Koprowski, national director, *Opportunity Starts at Home* Campaign

The event is free and open to the public; register [today](#).

Disaster Housing Recovery

Earthquake and Subsequent Tremors Rock Puerto Rico, Local Advocates Call Initial Federal Response “Unacceptable”

Puerto Rico continued to experience tremors after a deadly earthquake struck the island's southern region in the early morning of January 7. The quake demolished homes, destroyed infrastructure, and killed at least one individual. Although shelters are open, many shelters are deemed unable to withstand further tremors that continued to rattle the island. As a result, many Puerto Ricans with damaged or destroyed homes have taken to sleeping in their vehicles to avoid injuries from collapsing buildings.

The quake severely damaged an electric plant that cut off power to the entire territory. The Puerto Rico Power Authority says it may take up to a year for full power to be restored. Puerto Rico Governor Wanda Vazquez declared a state of emergency, and she and Senators Rick Scott (R-FL) and Marco Rubio (R-FL) requested a [federal disaster declaration](#), which was subsequently granted by President Trump.

Ayuda Legal Puerto Rico, a member of the NLIHC-led Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition (DHRC) of over 850 local, state, and national groups working for equitable disaster recovery, called the federal response inadequate and urged funding for temporary shelters and housing repairs. Ayuda Legal Puerto Rico released a [statement](#) saying, “It is unacceptable that people, especially the elderly and children, sleep outdoors - as is happening right now in the [earthquake] affected areas. That is why it is urgent that the necessary help be made available so that these people can be placed under safe roofs. Unlike the situation after a hurricane, this situation is cannot be resolved with a blue tarp, but requires immediate assistance including temporary housing, hotel vouchers and others.” The Puerto Rico governor has said that the territorial government must complete a damage assessment prior to requesting such funds.

Read Ayuda Legal Puerto Rico's statement at: <https://bit.ly/2tMhQiy>

Advocates and Congressional Leaders Call for HUD to Release Mitigation Assistance for Puerto Rico After Deadly Earthquake

In the aftermath of the deadly earthquake and subsequent tremors that devastated parts of Puerto Rico last week, members of Congress and advocates pushed for HUD to release the over \$16 billion in recovery and mitigation funding the agency has withheld from the territory nearly two years after it was approved by Congress. The

agency has refused to release the funding in defiance of a congressionally mandated deadline requiring the agency do so by September 4, 2019.

The Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition (DHRC) – an NLIHC-led coalition of over 850 national, state, and local groups working in disaster recovery – released a [statement](#) calling for the administration to immediately release the withheld funding in the wake of the earthquake. “The devastation wrought by this earthquake is exactly what these funds are meant to mitigate,” said Diane Yentel, NLIHC president and CEO. “Secretary Carson’s abhorrent decision to withhold these resources leaves the people of Puerto Rico struggling to recover and at grave risk of additional suffering when the next disaster hits, as surely it will. The administration must act immediately – it has a statutory and moral imperative to do so.”

Congressional leaders also released statements demanding the funds be released. “We call upon the White House to stop its unlawful withholding of funds from Puerto Rico,” said House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) at her [weekly press conference](#). “There are needs that need to be met, there has been a disaster designated, but the ongoing withholding of funds appropriated by Congress to Puerto Rico is illegal.” A group of six members of Congress also sent HUD a [letter](#) calling the release of the funds “long overdue” and saying that “Puerto Rico continues to rebuild following Hurricane Maria’s devastation, and must now confront the destruction brought by yet another natural disaster.”

Democratic presidential primary candidates joined Congressional leaders in [criticizing President Trump](#) for his delay in releasing Hurricane Maria-related recovery and mitigation funding and called on the president to swiftly support recovery efforts from last week’s earthquakes on the island.

In response to House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Raul Grijalva’s (D-AZ) call for the Trump administration to release [stalled mitigation and recovery aid](#) for Puerto Rico, a HUD spokesperson said releasing the funding “without proper accountability is not going to happen.”

Read DHRC’s statement at: <https://bit.ly/2Ncvsuv>

Read a transcript of Speaker Pelosi’s press conference at: <https://bit.ly/35BYcD3>

Read the congressional letter to HUD at: <https://bit.ly/37W9GCS>

Additional Disaster Housing Recovery Updates - January 13, 2020

The following is a review of additional disaster housing recovery developments since the last edition of *Memo to Members and Partners* (for the article in the previous *Memo*, see [1/06](#)).

Federal Action & National News

FEMA released its annual *National Preparedness Report* for 2019. The document covers natural and man-made threats to the lives and property of Americans. Drought, sea-level rise, and climate change [were not mentioned](#) in the nearly 60-page document.

A [new report](#) from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine provides recommendations on how to make supply lines more resilient to disasters – ensuring food, medicine, and other essential goods reach disaster areas.

Midwest Flooding

Nebraska

Winter snow and cold are [not stopping](#) efforts in the Midwest to recover from the damage of the 2019 flood season.

Davenport Iowa is [looking at options](#) to deal with the rising Mississippi River, which cuts through its downtown. The flooding experienced by the city in 2019 has added urgency to these deliberations.

Midwest Tornadoes

Disaster recovery groups are looking for [housing options](#) in the Dayton area as the region recovers from tornadoes that damaged homes and businesses in 2019. Volunteers seek to repair and build homes for survivors.

Hawaii Volcanos

[Voluntary buyouts](#) for homes damaged during the 2018 Kilauea volcano eruption will be offered using the nearly \$84 million in recovery funding Hawaii received from HUD.

Tropical Storm Imelda & Hurricane Harvey

Texas

A bill in the Texas Legislature would help homeowners by lowering the amount of property tax they are required to pay on [flood-damaged properties](#).

California Wildfires

The U.S. Department of Commerce [announced](#) it will invest more than \$7.4 million through its Economic Development Administration in areas struck by the Tubbs and Camp wildfires during 2017 and 2018. The funds will pay for a disaster recovery manager in Paradise and construct a building-trades education center in Sonoma County.

Hurricane Michael

Florida

JP Morgan Chase invested a half-million dollars into an affordable housing resiliency program in Tampa Bay. The two-year grant will fund the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council's new [Resilient and Energy Assessment of Communities and Housing](#) (REACH) program.

Survivors of Hurricane Michael in Bay County have until [April 11](#) to move out of FEMA-funded trailers. As the deadline approaches, many worry that without further housing assistance they will become homeless.

Hurricane Florence & Hurricane Dorian

North Carolina

When [FEMA denied](#) North Carolina's request for a disaster declaration after Hurricane Dorian struck the Outer Banks, local nonprofits were forced to take on the recovery without federal assistance.

A federal investigation found that [MLU](#), a Georgia-based disaster relief company, underpaid employees while they worked to aid recovery efforts after Hurricane Florence.

2016 and 2017 Disasters

Superstorm Sandy: A couple is [still displaced from its home](#) damaged during Superstorm Sandy, despite enrolling in the “Build it Back” program.

Research

HUD Releases 2019 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress

HUD released [The 2019 Annual Homeless Assessment Report \(AHAR\), Part 1](#), which provides estimates of homelessness in the U.S. The 2019 report estimates 568,000 people were experiencing homelessness in January 2019, which reflects a 3% increase since 2018 but a 12% decrease since 2007. Although the number of people staying in sheltered locations fell by 0.5% between 2018 and 2019, the number of people unsheltered rose by 9%.

The AHAR summarizes estimates of homelessness at the national, state, and Continuum of Care (CoC) levels based on data from the annual point-in-time (PIT) counts of sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness on a single night in January. Continuums of Care are local planning bodies responsible for coordinating homelessness services. The PIT counts, conducted by local volunteers, are a “snapshot” of homelessness.

Sixty-three percent of the people experiencing homelessness were staying in sheltered locations, such as emergency shelters, transitional housing, or safe havens. Thirty-seven percent were unsheltered, living in places not meant for human habitation, such as streets, parks, vehicles, or abandoned buildings. In five states—Arkansas, California, Hawaii, Nevada, and Oregon—more than half of all people experiencing homelessness were found in unsheltered locations. By contrast, in Maine, Massachusetts, Nebraska, New York, and North Dakota, at least 95% of people experiencing homelessness were sheltered. New York manages to have one of the lowest unsheltered rates in the country despite having the second largest population of people experiencing homelessness (92,091).

Roughly 30% (171,670) of the homeless population in January 2019 were in families with children. The average homeless family household consisted of three people. The number of homeless people in families with children declined by 5% from January 2018 and by 27% since January 2007. Ninety-one percent of people experiencing homelessness in families with children were staying in sheltered locations.

Twenty-seven percent (152,698) of the homeless population were youths under the age of 25. The PIT count found 35,038 unaccompanied youths under the age of 25, which represented 6% of the total population experiencing homelessness. Slightly more than half of unaccompanied homeless youths were staying in sheltered locations—a much higher rate than for all people experiencing homelessness (37%). There were also 7,564 homeless parenting youths under the age of 25.

African Americans remained overrepresented among the homeless population compared to the U.S. population. Whereas they represent 13% of the U.S. population, African Americans accounted for 40% of all people experiencing homelessness in 2019. Whites account for 77% of the total U.S. population but only 48% of all people experiencing homelessness. Unsheltered homelessness increased across all racial groups from 2018 to 2019, with the largest absolute increases among whites (an increase of 5,592 or 5%) and African Americans (an increase of 5,288 or 10%). The number of unsheltered Native Americans increased by 2,200, or 28%.

Eight percent of homeless adults (37,085) were veterans, of whom 61% were sheltered and 39% were unsheltered. Nearly all homeless veterans were experiencing homelessness as individuals (98%) rather than as

members of families with children. Veteran homelessness declined by 2% between 2018 and 2019, with an overall decline of almost 50% since 2009.

Nearly half of the homeless population was concentrated in three states: California (27%), New York (16%), and Florida (5%). Between 2018 and 2019, 29 states and the District of Columbia experienced a decline in their homeless population, while homelessness increased in the 21 other states. The largest absolute increases were observed in California, Oregon, Georgia, Minnesota, and New Mexico. Florida, Massachusetts, Colorado, Connecticut, and Washington saw the largest absolute decreases. From 2007 to 2019, the homeless population increased in 13 states and the District of Columbia and declined in 37 states.

“What the report did not say: homelessness is solvable,” said NLIHC president and CEO Diane Yentel in [press statement](#) on the report. “We have proven solutions to end homelessness and, in the wealthiest nation in the world, we have the resources to solve the problem. We lack only the political will to fund the solutions at the scale necessary.”

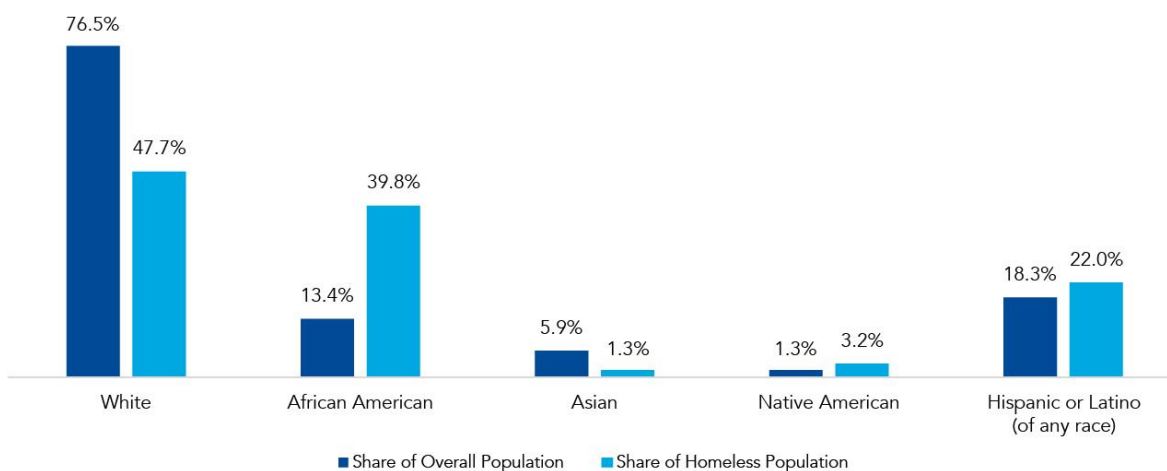
The *2019 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress, Part I* is available at: <https://bit.ly/2QCnBbM>

Read Diane Yentel’s press statement at: <https://bit.ly/2tJ9GaS>

Fact of the Week

African Americans Experience Homelessness Disproportionately

Share of Total U.S. Population and Share of Population Experiencing Homelessness, by Racial and Ethnic Category



Source: HUD, 2019 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress. US Census Bureau, QuickFacts.

Source: HUD, 2-019 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress. U.S. Census Bureau, QuickFacts.

From the Field

New York City Council Passes Landmark Legislation to Address Homelessness Crisis

The New York City Council passed groundbreaking legislation on December 19, 2019, that will create more permanent housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

The legislation (Intro 1211-A), sponsored by Council Member Rafael Salamanca, Jr. (D), will require most City-financed new construction projects with 41 or more apartments to set aside at least 15% of them for households experiencing homelessness. The *House Our Future NY Campaign*, led by 69 organizations including Coalition for the Homeless, an NLIHC state partner, built momentum for the legislation by organizing rallies and participating in hearings highlighting the dire need for more permanent, affordable housing for the most vulnerable New Yorkers.

More than 62,000 people, including more than 22,000 children, sleep in shelters each night in New York City. In 2017, Mayor Bill de Blasio (D) launched *Housing New York 2.0*, a plan to address the city's affordable housing crisis by creating or preserving 300,000 affordable homes by 2026. Of these 300,000 apartments, only 15,000 were explicitly targeted to people experiencing homelessness, 6,000 to be developed through new construction and the remaining 9,000 to be rehabbed apartments.

Since 2014, half of all City-assisted housing developments have created no apartments for people experiencing homelessness. Over the last two years, the *House Our Future NY Campaign* has urged Mayor Blasio to align his *Housing New York 2.0* plan with the reality of the homelessness crisis. They asked him for 30,000 deeply subsidized, affordable apartments for homeless New Yorkers by 2026, with 24,000 of them to be created through new construction.

In December of 2018, the campaign's advocates joined with Council Member Rafael Salamanca Jr. and staged a sit-in at City Hall to put pressure on the mayor to adopt their housing plan for people experiencing homelessness. One year later, the same advocates applauded Council Member Salamanca Jr., Speaker Corey Johnson, and their many Council allies for passage of the bill.

Intro 1211-A will create an estimated 1,000 additional apartments for homeless New Yorkers per year. These new apartments will add much-needed housing to the City's current commitment of 15,000 units by 2026 outlined in the Mayor's housing plan.

"The Council has been a crucial ally in pushing the administration to do what's right, and the agreement announced today will give hope to the more than 62,000 New Yorkers currently in shelters and thousands more on the streets – many of whom have been on the frontlines of this campaign," [stated](#) Giselle Routhier, policy director at Coalition for the Homeless.

For more information about the *House Our Future NY Campaign*, visit: <https://bit.ly/2FzAgFT>

NLIHC in the News

NLIHC in the News for the Week of January 5

The following are some of the news stories that NLIHC contributed to during the week of January 5:

- "As Trump Ditches a Fair Housing Rule, New York City Doubles Down," *City Lab*, January 8 at: <https://tinyurl.com/t8usrg4>

- “City of Myrtle Beach planning for workforce housing opportunities,” *WMBF News*, January 7 at: <https://tinyurl.com/r459moj>
- “Growing number of older people living on the streets in Arizona,” *Pinal Central*, January 7 at: <https://tinyurl.com/t347faa>
- “Trump moves to roll back Obama housing desegregation rule,” *Politico*, January 6 at: <https://tinyurl.com/yzhcojqp>
- “New Trump rule could repeal Obama effort to promote housing desegregation,” *Curbed*, January 6 at: <https://tinyurl.com/ucohbgx>

NLIHC News

Where to Find Us – January 13

NLIHC President and CEO Diane Yentel and other NLIHC staff will be speaking at the following events in the coming months:

- [CHAPA Breakfast Forum: Doing Business in Times of Uncertainty, Part IV](#), Boston, MA, January 28
- [At What Price? The Hidden Costs of Housing](#), The Texas Lyceum, Waco, TX, February 7
- [Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless Legislative Action Day 2020](#), Boston, MA, February 27
- Humility Homes and Services 30 Years Celebration, Davenport, IA, April 18
- Tulsa Mayor's Development Roundtable, Tulsa, OK, April 30
- [Princeton Community Housing Annual Homes Build Opportunity Gala](#), Princeton, NJ, June 13

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