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Coronavirus, Homelessness, and Housing

NLIHC and DHRC Hosts Weekly Calls on Coronavirus, Homelessness, Housing; Join Today's Call!

NLIHC and the NLIHC-led Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition (DHRC) will host weekly national calls every Monday afternoon about coronavirus as it impacts housing and homelessness. Housing and homelessness advocates across the country will discuss how federal, state, and local governments and nonprofits are responding to the coronavirus pandemic and its impact on low-income households and people experiencing homelessness. The next call will be held today (March 23) from 2:30 to 4 p.m. ET. Join at:

<https://bit.ly/3b5PyzP>

Today's call will feature updates from Doug Guthrie, president and CEO of the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles; Richard Cho, executive director of the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness; Douglas Schenkelberg, executive director of the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless; Eric Samuels, president and CEO of the Texas Homeless Network; Debbie Fox, senior housing policy and practice specialist at the National Network to End Domestic Violence; among others. We will also hear from representatives from FEMA, HUD (Deputy Secretary Brian Montgomery is confirmed), FHFA and Capitol Hill on their planned responses to the urgent need to get and keep people stably housed during the pandemic.

Register for today's [Coronavirus, Homelessness, and Housing](https://bit.ly/3b5PyzP) call at: <https://bit.ly/3b5PyzP>

More information about Coronavirus and Housing/Homelessness is at: <https://bit.ly/2U3Olnb>

Coronavirus - Congress

Coronavirus - Administration

President Signs Second Coronavirus Emergency Assistance Package with No Housing or Homelessness Resources; Congress Negotiating Third Bill

President Trump signed into law on March 18 the "Families First Coronavirus Response Act" ([H.R.6201](#)), a multibillion-dollar emergency assistance package to respond to the coronavirus pandemic. The bill, which passed out of the Senate on a 90-8 vote the same day, contains much-needed assistance for households thrown into economic turmoil by the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic but does not include critically important housing assistance for low-income renters or assistance for people experiencing homelessness.

Members of Congress are working to finalize a third supplemental package as soon as possible. It is essential that advocates continue to call their representatives and senators to urge them to include resources to address the housing and health needs of low-income renters and people experiencing homelessness in the next coronavirus stimulus package. People living without shelter are at a particularly elevated risk of coronavirus outbreak and have limited access to the preventative measures being recommended, including handwashing, home isolation, avoiding high touch surfaces, and accessing healthcare. Many low-income renters and people experiencing homelessness are seniors, and many have underlying health conditions, both of which make them at high risk if they become ill from COVID-19.

In a [statement](#), NLIHC president and CEO Diane Yentel stressed the necessity of including resources for low-income people and people experiencing homelessness in any comprehensive supplemental package. "Providing resources to protect against an outbreak of coronavirus among people who are homeless is not only a moral

imperative; it's an urgent public health necessity," said Yentel. "The very least our country must do during a national health emergency, particularly when our collective protection against the spread of the illness depends on our ability to self-quarantine at home, is ensure that we house the lowest-income and most vulnerable people."

NLIHC's Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition (DHRC) released a set of [recommendations](#) for Congress to include in any comprehensive response to coronavirus. These recommendations will be updated as the outbreak continues and the needs of low-income people and people experiencing homelessness evolve.

The DHRC will also be hosting a weekly national call on the coronavirus and homelessness/housing on Mondays at 2:30 p.m. EST. Housing and homelessness advocates across the country will discuss how federal, state, and local governments and nonprofits are responding to the coronavirus pandemic and its impact on low-income households and people experiencing homelessness. The next call will be held today (March 23) at 2:30 p.m. EST. Register for the call [here](#).

Learn more about the "Families First Coronavirus Response Act" at: <https://bit.ly/2xcJjLT>

Read Diane Yentel's statement at: <https://bit.ly/2QyWEVU>

Read the DHRC's recommendations to Congress at: <https://nlihc.org/responding-coronavirus>

Register for today's national call at: <https://bit.ly/2Qu6hVD>

Administration Suspends Foreclosures and Evictions on Certain Properties

The Trump administration [announced](#) on March 18 that foreclosures and evictions for Federal Housing Administration (FHA)-backed mortgages for single family properties would be suspended for the next 60 days. The guidance instructs mortgage servicers to suspend both new foreclosures and foreclosures currently in process and to cease eviction proceedings for people residing in FHA-insured single-family properties. These guidelines apply only to homeowners with single-family properties insured through the FHA, about 8.1 million households.

Following the administration's announcement about FHA-backed mortgages, the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA) – the agency overseeing the government-sponsored entities (GSEs) Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac – [announced](#) the GSEs would also implement a 60-day suspension on foreclosures and evictions for homeowners behind on their mortgages. The announcement is expected to impact approximately 182,000 homeowners who are currently in some stage of the foreclosure process.

In addition, USDA announced that it would be [suspending](#) foreclosures and evictions for 60 days on USDA-financed homes in rural America.

In a [statement](#), NLIHC president and CEO Diane Yentel noted that these actions are an important first step, but "far more is needed to protect the people who are at the greatest risk of evictions and homelessness – America's lowest-income renters who were already struggling to pay rent and make ends meet before this latest disaster, and people experiencing homelessness."

Read the FHA announcement at: <https://bit.ly/2x9LsZ3>

Learn more about the FHFA announcement at: <https://politi.co/2WsASqE>

Read Diane's statement at: <https://bit.ly/33vjiUk>

NLIHC and NHLP Send Joint Letters Urging HUD and USDA to Protect Tenants during Coronavirus Outbreak

NLIHC and the National Housing Law Project (NHLP) sent a [joint letter](#) to HUD Secretary Ben Carson on March 19 urging HUD to take immediate action to protect tenants and homeowners during and after the coronavirus outbreak. The sent a similar [letter](#) to USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue to protect tenants and homeowners in rural housing.

Under certain situations, the secretaries of HUD and USDA have broad authority to waive regulations. The letters lists actions the agencies should adopt to ensure a timely response to the continuing and growing impacts of coronavirus on tenants, including implementing a moratorium on all program evictions and subsidy terminations; streamlining and promoting interim recertifications; pausing voucher search periods; issuing enhanced social distancing and hygiene protocols for site-based housing; ensuring accessible language for people with disabilities; and establishing a moratorium on late fees.

The letter to HUD urges Secretary Carson to use HUD's broad, national platform to call for additional funding for Emergency Solutions Grants for homelessness service providers, for a nationwide moratorium on all evictions and foreclosures, and for market-rate property owners to waive late fees while the coronavirus outbreak continues. The letters close by stressing that immediate action is necessary to ensure renters and homeowners avoid housing insecurity and homelessness during the coronavirus outbreak and after the outbreak has subsided.

The letter to HUD is at: <https://bit.ly/2xTpBW3>

The letter to USDA is at: <https://bit.ly/2xXOfEU>

OMB Sends Letter to Congress Requesting Additional \$400 Million for Homeless Assistance Grants in Response to Coronavirus

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) sent a [letter](#) to Congress on March 17 requesting \$400 million in additional funding for the HUD's Emergency Solutions Grants program. The additional funding would provide much-needed assistance for unsheltered people experiencing homelessness and homelessness service providers in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

People experiencing homelessness, and particularly those without shelter, are at an elevated risk of coronavirus infections, as they have limited access to preventative measures like handwashing, home isolation, and access to healthcare services. People experiencing homelessness are also more likely to have underlying chronic health conditions that can increase the likelihood of severe, possibly life-threatening complications. While two emergency supplemental packages to address the fallout from the coronavirus pandemic have already been signed into law, neither package includes funding to address housing or other urgent needs of people experiencing homelessness.

NLIHC's Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition (DHRC) developed a list of [recommendations](#) for Congress to address the housing needs of America's lowest-income households and people experiencing homelessness during the coronavirus pandemic. These recommendations include \$10-14 billion in additional funding for the Emergency Solutions Grant program, which would help communities minimize the number of people living in

homeless encampments, enable shelters to hire additional staff and purchase cleaning supplies, and help communities convert spaces like hotels into self-quarantine spaces.

Read OMB's letter to Congress at: <https://politi.co/33u28Xg>

Read DHRC's recommendations to Congress at: <https://nlihc.org/responding-coronavirus>

Stafford Act COVID-19 Emergency Declaration Activates FEMA's Public Assistance Program

Due to the worsening COVID-19 crisis, President Trump declared a national emergency on March 13. In doing so, the president declared an emergency under two separate laws. The first [declaration](#) – made under the National Emergencies Act - triggers emergency authority to waive federal requirements like those found in the Medicare and Medicaid programs. The second [declaration](#) – made under the Stafford Act – allows FEMA to utilize its Disaster Relief Fund to assist in combatting the pandemic.

A Declaration of an Emergency under the Stafford Act is not equivalent to a Major Disaster Declaration that is generally made after major natural disasters. The Declaration of an Emergency [permits](#) FEMA to use Direct Federal Assistance (DFA) and activate the Emergency Protective Measures (Category 2) of the agency's Public Assistance (PA) Program. The program permits state and local governments, as well as qualifying nonprofits, to receive funding for eligible Emergency Protective Measures being taken to address the pandemic. Because the emergency declared was national in scope, individual requests for disaster declarations by state or territorial governors are not needed to access this funding.

The PA program application period typically lasts for 30 days. The funding will be provided at the regular 75% federal cost share. FEMA will not duplicate any assistance provided by the Department of Health and Human Services or the Centers for Disease Control. There are a range of eligible activities available under Category 2, ranging from the purchase and distribution of food and medical supplies to the medical [sheltering](#) of infected patients. For more information on eligible uses please see this fact sheet from NLIHC.

Read FEMA's Public Assistance Program/COVID-19 Fact Sheet at: <https://bit.ly/2xRGJLH>

Read NLIHC's Fact Sheet on Activity and Nonprofit Eligibility at: <https://bit.ly/39ev5Yv>

HUD Offers Office Hours Regarding COVID-19 Planning & Response for Homeless Assistance Providers

HUD's Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs (SNAPS) invited homeless assistance providers and their partners to participate in an Office Hours session to discuss COVID-19 planning and response on March 20. Presenters from a variety of federal agencies and their partners were available for a live question and answer session.

The March 20 Office Hours session was the second offered by SNAPS related to COVID-19 planning and response. Those who participated in the session on March 13 were encouraged to attend the March 20 session for the latest information and updates. The March 13 Office Hours recording and slides are on the HUD Exchange at: <https://bit.ly/2xdRyY5>

On March 10, HUD conducted a webinar, “Infectious Disease Preparedness for Homeless Assistance Providers and Their Partners.” Those who did not join that March 10 webinar were encouraged to view the March 10 webinar materials before joining the March 20 Office Hours question and answer session. The recording is approximately 75 minutes long. It is at: <https://bit.ly/3b8MoLO>

The March 20 Office Hours recording will also be available at HUD Exchange.

HUD Office of Multifamily Housing Updates Coronavirus FAQs

HUD’s Office of Multifamily Housing Programs (Multifamily), which oversees contracts with private owners of HUD-assisted properties made updates to its “[Questions and Answers for Office of Multifamily Housing Stakeholders: Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)” (see *Memo*, [3/16](#)) on March 16.

One notable change was made in the “Policy and Operations” category. Q7 is substantially different, deleting the previous Q8 regarding extensions of time for residents to complete income recertifications. Q7 now explains that an owner may consider extenuating circumstances (including COVID-19 considerations in the community) when the tenant is not available to attend the recertification interview, sign consent forms, or sign form HUD-50059. When an extenuating circumstance is present, there is no change to the tenant’s recertification anniversary date. The Total Tenant Payment/Tenant Rent and the assistance payment are effective retroactively to the recertification anniversary date.

Several notable changes were made in the “Property Reviews and Inspections” category. Q1 states that, until further notice, Multifamily is postponing all Real Estate Assessment Center (REAC) property inspections for all Multifamily-assisted properties. Where there is an exigent circumstance or reason to believe that there is a threat to life or property at a specific location, inspections will be conducted by HUD quality assurance inspectors in compliance with Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines. Q2 adds that HUD is suspending standard Management Occupancy Reviews (MORs) until a performance-based contract administrator (PBCA) determines that local conditions no longer limit or prevent the PBCA from performing MORs safely.

Q4 indicates that Rent Comparability Studies (RCSs) are suspended in areas that are under a state or nationally declared emergency or where public health officials have imposed limited travel. (RCSs are requested by owners to demonstrate that the rent they wish to charge is comparable to similar, unsubsidized properties in the vicinity. HUD will provisionally accept an owner’s RCS up to 5% above current rent levels, although HUD or the contract administrator (CA) must still review an owner’s RCS to make sure the rent conclusions are reasonable. At the owner’s request, these conclusions can be subject to a new HUD RCS when normal activities resume. On a case-by-case basis, HUD may review and accept higher rents without a HUD RCS at HUD’s discretion.

Finally, under the category “Emergency Preparedness,” HUD adds to Q2, “[Capacity-Building Toolkit for including Aging and Disabled Networks](#)” from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Advocates should periodically check the [Multifamily website](#) for updates. NLIHC will also alert *Memo* readers and post updates to NLIHC’s [COVID-19 webpage](#).

“Questions and Answers for Office of Multifamily Housing Stakeholders: Coronavirus (COVID-19)” is at: <https://bit.ly/392IhPS>

NLIHC has a new webpage about coronavirus/COVID-19 and housing and homelessness at: <https://bit.ly/2wPKFMA>

More information about the Office of Multifamily's Project-Based Rental Assistance program is on [page 4-46](#) of NLIHC's *2019 Advocates' Guide*.

HUD's Office of Public and Indian Housing Issues COVID-19 FAQs

HUD's Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH) issued "[COVID-19 FAQs for the Public Housing, Housing Choice Voucher \(HCV\) – including the Project-based Voucher Program \(PBV\) – and Native American Programs.](#)" The FAQs are not dated, but HUD indicates they are as of March 13 on HUD's [COVID-19 \("Coronavirus"\) Information and Resources webpage](#).

Until further notice, Real Estate Assessment Center (REAC) property inspections are postponed for all PIH properties. Where there is an exigent circumstance or reason to believe that there is a threat to life or property at a specific location, inspections will be conducted by HUD quality assurance inspectors in compliance with Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines.

PHA Plan submission deadlines and annual resident income recertifications are required by statute and cannot be waived. HUD recognizes, however, that local circumstances may impact a public housing agency's (PHA's) ability to comply with certain requirements, including deadlines. HUD encourages PHAs to prioritize efforts to reduce or mitigate the risk of infection. The assistant secretary of Public and Indian Housing can consider regulatory waivers for PHAs, Tribes, and Tribally Designated Housing Entities (TDHEs) significantly impacted by a COVID-19 outbreak. Waivers will be expedited during this period.

Regarding deadlines for income recertifications, Housing Quality Standards (HQS) inspections, and extensions on voucher and lease-ups, the FAQ indicates waivers are not needed for voucher extensions and lease-up. With respect to HQS inspections, HUD encourages PHAs to use existing inspection flexibilities. If they have not already, PHAs should consider adopting biennial inspections (Notice PIH 2016-05: Attachment K: Biennial inspections and the use of alternative inspection methods and inspection timeframes).

If a COVID-19 outbreak occurs and residents must stay home and subsequently cannot pay rent due to a loss of income, assisted families in the public housing and Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) programs currently have the ability to report decreases in income. PHAs then adjust the family share of the rent and can grant hardship exemptions consistent with regulations and the PHA's policies. A decrease in family income is not the basis for a termination of tenancy action in the HCV program or for eviction from public housing.

In light of these extraordinary circumstances, HUD encourages PHAs and owners of Project-Based Voucher (PBV) properties to prevent the displacement of families through eviction which significantly increases the risk of homelessness and overcrowding. Tribes and TDHEs administering the Indian Housing Block Grant (IHBG) program are encouraged to use their discretion and best judgment to provide relief to any residents who cannot meet their rent obligations under these circumstances.

Public housing Operating Funds can be used to cover staff labor hours for planning and response, personal protective equipment (PPE), and cleaning supplies such as disinfectants, sanitizers, etc.

PHAs may use public housing Capital Funds to cover costs of capital expenditures designed to improve the safety of residents such as improved ventilation systems and high-grade filters, portable air filtration equipment, and portable humidifiers. PHAs may also use Capital Funds as management improvements to cover costs such as sanitation equipment for common areas, emergency planning, public health training, and IT equipment and upgrades to allow for remote public meetings or telework by PHA staff.

The FAQ provides a long list of eligible activities under the Indian Housing Block Grant (IHBG) program, starting on page 6. The Indian Community Development Block Grant (ICDBG) program allows for a wide range of uses. Although Single Purpose ICDBG grants are awarded for specific projects, HUD will consider any program amendments submitted by Tribes in accordance with 24 CFR 1003.305 to help address the impact of COVID-19.

“COVID-19 FAQs for the Public Housing, Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) – including the Project-based Voucher Program (PBV) – and Native American Programs” is at: <https://bit.ly/3dcXlxV>

HUD’s COVID-19 ("Coronavirus") Information and Resources webpage is at: <https://www.hud.gov/coronavirus>

NLIHC has a new webpage about coronavirus and housing and homelessness at: <https://bit.ly/2wPKFMA>

More about public housing is on [page 4-25](#) of NLIHC’s 2019 Advocates’ Guide.

More about Housing Choice Vouchers is on [page 4-1](#) of NLIHC’s 2019 Advocates’ Guide.

More about Project-Based Vouchers is on [page 4-7](#) of NLIHC’s 2019 Advocates’ Guide.

More about Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian Housing Programs is on [page 5-25](#) of NLIHC’s 2019 Advocates’ Guide.

Health Services Related to COVID-19 Not Considered in Public-Charge Determinations

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) [announced](#) on March 13 that the agency will not consider “testing, treatment, nor preventative care (including vaccines, if a vaccine becomes available) related to COVID-19” in any public-charge determinations for immigrants applying for a green card. Although the Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS’s) newly implemented public-charge rule counts the use of most forms of Medicaid as a strike against an immigrant’s application, this guidance from USCIS states that COVID-19 services provided by or through public benefits will not be considered in a public-charge determination. The Protecting Immigrant Families campaign urges USCIS to make broader announcements to ensure immigrants and their families know their rights during the novel coronavirus crisis.

Noncitizens seeking admission to the U.S. or applying for lawful permanent resident status (green card) have long been subject to a review to determine whether they are, or might become, a “public charge,” defined as someone who might become “primarily dependent on the government.” DHS recently implemented a harmful new rule, which expands the list of “public benefits” that could lead an immigrant to be considered a potential public charge to include the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, and federal housing assistance, such as public housing, Housing Choice Vouchers, and Section 8 Project-Based Rental Assistance. Immigration officials will also now consider other factors, such as health, age, income, and English language skills when making public charge determinations (see *Memo*, [8/19/19](#)).

The USCIS announcement is at: <https://bit.ly/2x9BOpj>

Resources about the new public-charge rule is at: ProtectingImmigrantFamilies.org

Coronavirus - Other

NLIHC Joins Letter Urging Coronavirus Responses to Address the Needs of People with Disabilities

NLIHC joined a [sign-on letter](#) on March 3 urging local, state, and national responses to the coronavirus pandemic to address the needs of people with disabilities at every stage of the pandemic. Led by the [World Institute on Disability](#), the letter calls for immediate and ongoing action to meet the needs of people with disabilities affected or potentially affected by the pandemic.

“Among the most important steps is to ensure the continuity of operations for services, supplies, and support that people with disabilities and older adults depend on to maintain their health, safety, dignity, and independence in the community,” the letter states. “Continuity of operations means that agencies, community, health maintenance, medical, transportation, and other essential service providers are able to continue performing essential functions under a broad range of circumstances without interruption.”

The letter is at: <https://bit.ly/2xd8gao>

Additional Coronavirus Updates - Monday, March 23, 2020

NLIHC and its Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition (DHRC) are hosting weekly national calls on COVID-19, homelessness, and housing every Monday afternoon. **The next call is today (March 23), 2:30 to 4:00 p.m. ET.** Register for the call at: <https://bit.ly/3b5PyzP>

NLIHC is also maintaining a COVID-19/Housing and Homelessness News and Resource page [here](#).

NLIHC and the DHRC will continue to advocate for an array of federal resources and protections for people experiencing homelessness and low-income renters, including emergency rental assistance and eviction prevention assistance, a national moratorium on evictions and foreclosures, and emergency funds for homelessness service providers, housing authorities, and housing providers, among others. See the DHRC’s [full list of policy recommendations](#), which will continue to be expanded and refined.

National Updates

Additional Updates on Congress

The New Democrat Coalition released a [set](#) of recommendations for coronavirus response and economic recovery that included more money for Emergency Solutions Grants for shelter providers, an increase to the Housing Choice Voucher Program, and more. The DHRC has been championing many of these measures.

House Financial Services Committee Ranking Member Patrick McHenry (R-NC) and Subcommittee on Housing, Community Development, and Insurance Ranking Member Steve Stivers (OH-R) sent [letters](#) to the largest public housing authorities urging them to implement policies assisting vulnerable residents during the coronavirus pandemic.

Representative Grace Meng (D-NY) [sent a letter](#) to the president urging the administration to provide immediate relief to individuals experiencing homelessness amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Additional Federal Guidance

The National Center for Biotechnology Information released “[Homelessness and the Response to Emerging Infectious Disease Outbreaks: Lessons from SARS](#)”

Media Reporting

Mother Jones [interviewed](#) NLIHC President and CEO Diane Yentel on the impact the COVID-19 pandemic is having on individuals experiencing homelessness and the shelters that serve them.

US News and World Report [covered](#) last week’s DHRC conference call on the pandemic, homelessness and housing, detailing the challenges individuals experiencing homelessness and housing-insecure renters will experience during the pandemic.

The Associate Press released an [analysis](#) showing that the vast majority of renters in the U.S. would not be assisted by HUD’s decision to pause evictions and foreclosures for a 60-day period.

Vox [covered](#) the threat to individuals experiencing homelessness posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The New York Times [covered](#) the ongoing struggle to head off evictions due to the pandemic at the federal, state, and local levels.

An [article](#) from the Brookings Institution covered ways people experiencing homelessness and individuals living in substandard or unaffordable housing are uniquely susceptible to the epidemic.

Additional Advocacy Efforts

The Network Lobby for Catholic Social Justice released a [series](#) of requests regarding the Coronavirus/COVID-19 stimulus bill, including increased homeless assistance funding and a halt on evictions and foreclosures.

The Housing Assistance Council released a [letter](#) calling for a moratorium on foreclosures and evictions for USDA Sec. 502 housing.

The Center for American Progress released a [blog article](#) calling for increased assistance for homeless individuals and families during the pandemic.

State News

California

An individual experiencing homelessness in Silicon Valley [died](#) from COVID-19, the first confirmed death from the virus of a someone experiencing homelessness.

California Governor Gavin Newsom did [not issue](#) a statewide eviction ban but encouraged municipalities to do so. The governor also [authorized](#) \$150 million in state funds to protect people experiencing homelessness from COVID-19.

Virginia

The Supreme Court of Virginia [declared](#) a judicial emergency and suspended evictions during the pandemic.

Illinois

The Shriver Center on Poverty Law sent a [letter](#) to Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker outlining actions needed to protect vulnerable communities from the impacts of the pandemic.

Indiana

Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb ordered a [pause](#) on tenant evictions, among other measures.

Missouri

The Missouri judiciary [announced](#) a temporary ban on home evictions.

Kansas

Kansas Governor Laura Kelly [announced](#) that she would be banning evictions and foreclosures until May 1.

Minnesota

The Minnesota judiciary has defined both foreclosures and evictions as “low priority cases” to be [paused](#).

Nevada

The Nevada Human Rights Coalition [called](#) for a statewide moratorium on evictions in that state.

New Jersey

Governor Phil Murphy [declared](#) an indefinite moratorium on evictions and on the removal of people from foreclosed homes. The state legislature is also working to pass a bill [expanding](#) the order.

North Carolina

Lawmakers [approved](#) a 90-day ban on eviction proceedings in the state.

Ohio

Activists are [pushing](#) for a statewide eviction ban in Ohio.

Pennsylvania

The Pennsylvania Public Utilities Commission [announced](#) a prohibition on residential utility terminations for the duration of the emergency declaration announced by the governor.

South Carolina

The South Carolina judiciary announced a [pause](#) on all evictions and foreclosures.

South Dakota

Homeless shelters in Sioux Falls are [already](#) overcrowded and struggling to meet CDC guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Texas

The Texas judiciary has [paused](#) all evictions.

DHRC member and NLIHC state partner Texas Housers released a [statement](#) on COVID-19 preparedness and protections for Texas.

Utah

The Utah Housing Coalition, an NLIHC state partner, is [calling](#) for a moratorium on evictions and foreclosures in Utah.

Virginia

The Virginia judiciary [paused](#) all non-emergency legal proceedings.

Washington State

Washington Governor Jay Inslee [paused](#) all evictions.

The closed downtown Spokane library [may](#) be used as a homeless shelter during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Local News

NLIHC provides an updated list of local eviction and foreclosure moratoriums [here](#).

Baltimore

Homeless service organizations in Baltimore are [working](#) on surmounting the daunting challenges of caring for the homeless during the pandemic.

Baltimore City announced it would be [taking over](#) the Pinderhughes homeless shelter

Boston

Boston will be setting up [tents](#) for potential homeless COVID-19 cases.

Hartford

Hartford CT officials are offering [quarantine sites](#) for individuals experiencing homelessness with COVID-19.

Los Angeles

People experiencing homelessness in LA are [adjusting](#) as the city's shelter-in-place order has closed off access to many places utilized by people experiencing homelessness, such as libraries.

Miami

In Miami-Dade County, workers have been [setting](#) up handwashing stations and distributing hand sanitizer for people experiencing homelessness. Ron Book, chairman of the Miami-Dade Homeless Trust, said: "We would urge the public do not, do not put spare change in homeless panhandlers' buckets, cups and hats right now. You endanger yourself. . . you are not staying the proper social distancing."

New York City

Seven New York City homeless shelter residents have now tested positive for coronavirus, a Department of Social Services spokesperson [says](#).

Pittsburgh

Organizations in Pittsburgh are [scrambling](#) to meet the challenges the homeless community faces during the pandemic.

Congress

Senator Jeff Merkley Introduces “Making Affordable Housing Opportunities More Equitable Act”

Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR) introduced on March 12 the “Making Affordable Housing Opportunities More Equitable Act” ([S. 3452](#)). This comprehensive bill is designed to reduce the shortcomings of current housing policies and funding levels by boldly addressing disparities and systemic obstacles to decent, accessible, and affordable housing for all. NLIHC supports the bill.

Senator Merkley’s bill would target the underlying cause of the U.S. affordable housing crisis – the severe shortage of affordable rental homes for people with the lowest incomes – through a \$40 billion investment in the national Housing Trust Fund (HTF). The HTF is the first new housing resource in decades targeted to building, rehabilitating, preserving, and operating rental housing for extremely low-income people. The bill would also create an emergency rental assistance voucher program to provide an additional 1 million vouchers by 2030, including a set-aside for Native tribes who are not eligible to administer Housing Choice Vouchers. The proposal also includes several measures to directly address homelessness, including \$10 billion over ten years for permanent supportive housing.

S. 3452 also includes critical resources to address the unique housing needs and challenges in rural areas. The proposal would authorize the Multifamily Preservation and Revitalization program, allowing for loan restructuring and decoupling of rental assistance from USDA-backed mortgages as a way to preserve the current affordable housing stock in rural areas. The bill also includes \$1 billion over ten years for the construction of multifamily rental housing projects financed through USDA Section 515 loans, which would help address the lack of accessible, affordable housing in rural communities. In addition, Senator Merkley proposes a grant to help nonprofits, resident cooperatives, tribal housing authorities, and public housing agencies or other state housing entities to acquire and preserve manufactured housing communities, an important source of affordable housing in many rural communities.

The bill includes several other provisions to promote fair housing and help protect tenants. One provision would add source of income as a protected class under the Fair Housing Act, prohibiting landlords from denying leases to voucher households. The bill would also establish the Office of Restorative Housing Justice within HUD to address the lasting impacts of historical government-backed discrimination, such as redlining. Senator Merkley also proposes restrictions on no-cause evictions and federal funding for right to counsel for people facing evictions, foreclosures, termination of a housing subsidy, or other housing issues. The bill would instruct jurisdictions to consider manufactured and modular housing, community land trusts, cooperative housing ownership models, accessory dwelling units, and other non-traditional forms of affordable housing in their Consolidated Plan processes.

More about the bill is at: <https://bit.ly/2weh8fD>

More about the national Housing Trust Fund is on [page 3-1](#) of NLIHC’s *2019 Advocates’ Guide*.

Representatives Jayapal and Meng Introduce “Housing is a Human Right Act”

Representatives Pramila Jayapal (D-WA) and Grace Meng (D-NY) introduced on March 19 the “[Housing is a Human Right Act](#)” (H.R. 6308). The bill would authorize more than \$200 billion over 10 years in federal resources aimed at reducing homelessness. If enacted, the bill would provide immediate relief to organizations working to provide emergency shelter and other supportive services during the coronavirus pandemic. NLIHC supports this bill.

The bill would authorize up to \$100 billion over 10 years for Continuum of Care (CoC) grants and Emergency Solutions Grants (ESGs). The proposal expands and reforms FEMA emergency food and shelter grants to better address homelessness, while also providing additional funding for public libraries to help them provide additional support for people experiencing homelessness. Representatives Jayapal and Meng also propose the creation of a new flexible grant program for municipalities to address housing and homelessness needs and incentivize evidence-based models, particularly alternatives to the criminalization of homelessness. The bill also includes provisions to help people experiencing homelessness access and replace personal documents and it protects their right to vote.

“The coronavirus pandemic makes it clear: housing is healthcare. We must invest the resources needed to safely shelter and house hundreds of thousands of people experiencing homelessness who are at the greatest risk of serious illness and death during this outbreak,” said Diane Yentel, NLIHC president and CEO in a joint press statement with the bill’s co-sponsors and other advocacy groups. “Congress should quickly provide emergency shelter and housing funds in its response to coronavirus to address the immediate needs and should enact Representatives Jayapal’s and Meng’s bill to provide needed resources to help end homelessness altogether so that we never again have people so vulnerable to a public health emergency.”

Representatives Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), Jesus “Chuy” Garcia (D-IL), Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY), Ilhan Omar (D-MN), Ayanna Pressley (D-MA), and Rashida Tlaib (D-MI) are co-sponsors of the bill.

A media release about the bill is at: <https://bit.ly/2UubpdU>

More about H.R. 6308 is at: <https://bit.ly/3a7J6bI>

Fight for Housing Justice

Senators Submit Comment Letter Opposing HUD’s Proposed AFFH Rule

A group of 37 Democratic senators, led by Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Ranking Member Sherrod Brown (D-OH), submitted a [comment letter](#) on March 16 opposing HUD’s proposed Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) rule. The senators state that the proposed rule would neither fulfill the Fair Housing Act’s purpose of ensuring fair and equitable housing nor adequately address the ongoing effects of discrimination and inequality in housing. The senators urged HUD to withdraw its current proposal and reimplement the more effective 2015 AFFH rule. The public comment period for this proposed rule closed on March 16.

The proposed AFFH rule would reverse the 2015 AFFH rule, which made the strongest effort in decades to reverse harmful patterns of segregation and discriminatory housing policies. In the letter, the senators express their deep concern with the proposed AFFH rule, stating it would “gut both the spirit and intent of the FHA [Fair Housing Act] and replace it with an approach that relies on the faulty premise that simply increasing housing supply can address the problems of housing discrimination and segregation.”

“Our collective future depends on all people having equal access to the opportunity to thrive and realize their potential,” the letter states. “The proposed rule is a disappointing abdication of federal efforts to empower

communities to address the ongoing effects of discrimination and inequality. Fifty-two years ago, Congress charged HUD with the responsibility of helping communities realize this promise. If HUD is to continue to carry out this responsibility, you must discard this proposed rule and recommit the Department to implementing the 2015 AFFH rule.”

In addition to Senator Brown, other signatories include Senators Chuck Schumer (D-NY), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Patty Murray (D-WA), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Dick Durbin (D-IL), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Ben Cardin (D-MD), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Tina Smith (D-MN), Ed Markey (D-MA), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV), Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Tim Kaine (D-VA), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Doug Jones (D-AL), Chris Coons (D-DE), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Bob Menendez (D-NJ), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Tom Udall (D-NM), Kamala Harris (D-CA), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Michael Bennet (D-CO), Jack Reed (D-RI), Tom Carper (D-DE), Martin Heinrich (D-NM), Brian Schatz (D-HI), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), and Scott Peters (D-MI).

The comment letter is at: <https://tinyurl.com/qv89mhd>

NLIHC Submits Comment Letter Opposing HUD’s Proposed AFFH Rule

NLIHC submitted a [comment letter](#) opposing HUD’s proposed Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) rule that is, in fact, not a fair housing rule. HUD’s proposal to gut the 2015 AFFH rule represents a complete retreat from efforts to undo historic, government-driven patterns of housing discrimination and segregation. NLIHC wrote that HUD should abandon its ill-conceived proposed “AFFH” rule, reinstate the 2015 Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule, and resume its implementation. By the March 16 close of the comment period, 19,555 comments were registered at [regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov).

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. The proposed rule offers a supply-side ideology that misleadingly assumes that an overall increase in the supply of market-rate 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 neither promotes fair housing choice nor ensures that any increase in the housing supply would even be affordable to low-income and extremely low-income households, much less people in the Fair Housing Act’s protected classes who face many obstacles to fair housing choice.

The first section of the letter addresses all of the problems with the proposed rule. The second section challenges HUD’s justifications for gutting the 2015 AFFH rule laid out in the preamble to the proposed rule.

NLIHC’s comment letter is at: <https://bit.ly/2Uo1Cpx>

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

Our Homes, Our Votes: 2020

Coronavirus-Required Social Distancing Is One More Reason to Plan on Voting by Mail

Voting by mail—also known as absentee voting—is a proven way to allow individuals to exercise their right to vote *without having to go to the polls*. This option is more important than ever in the face of the health and safety precautions necessary to combat coronavirus/COVID-19. A recent *New York Times* opinion [article](#), “Voting by Mail Will Save the 2020 Election,” encourages policymakers and voters to take simple steps to reduce the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the 2020 election cycle.

Almost half the country still has a primary election in the coming weeks; it is critical that individuals in these states vote. All states will mail a ballot to voters if certain conditions are met, and there is still sufficient time to request an absentee ballot in most states with upcoming primaries.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has compiled an excellent [resource](#) with information about absentee voting for each of the remaining 21 states with primaries. For each state, their analysis includes:

- the date of the primary
- the date the application must be received to get an absentee ballot
- how to apply
- who is eligible to vote by absentee ballot

The ACLU information, current as of March 17, reflects recent changes in certain primaries due to coronavirus.

Our Homes, Our Votes: 2020, NLIHC’s non-partisan candidate and voter engagement project, is closely monitoring the elections and encouraging affordable housing advocates and low-income renters to vote! Check out [our website](#) for more tips on voter engagement—and check back often to see more information about ways to engage voters and residents around absentee voting.

View Recording of Webinar on Effective Candidate Engagement

NLIHC’s *Our Homes, Our Votes: 2020* nonpartisan voter and candidate engagement project proceeds with its “Third Thursdays at Three” presentation series on crucial elements of effective election engagement for organizations and advocates committed to expanding affordable housing and ending homelessness. The March 19 session focused on effective candidate engagement, featuring guest speakers Eric Hufnagel, executive director at Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness, and Joan Serviss, executive director of the Arizona Housing Coalition. The session explored key strategies and considerations for conducting candidate surveys and candidate forums, asking questions at town hall meetings, and inviting candidates to visits affordable housing projects or to meetings conducted by nonprofit organizations.

The webinar began with a consideration of the current call to action on federal response to the COVID-19 pandemic and included an acknowledgement that public gatherings such as candidate forums and town hall meetings should not be scheduled until the CDC guidance on banning group gatherings is lifted. As the lowest-income people will be hardest hit by the pandemic, it remains even more important that low-income renters participate as informed voters in the upcoming November elections.

View a recording of the presentation and access the slides [here](#).

The next session in the “Third Thursdays at Three” series, taking place on April 16, will focus on educating voters. The session will include a discussion of producing voter guides, training new voters on what is on a ballot and what to bring with them to the polls, and informing voters about candidates’ positions. Register for the April 16 session and receive updates about future session [here](#).

Opportunity Starts at Home

Campaign Expresses Support for Housing Investments in Infrastructure and “Pathway to Stable and Affordable Housing for All Act”

The Steering Committee of the [Opportunity Starts at Home](#) multi-sector affordable homes campaign sent two separate letters to members of Congress on March 17: the first urges housing investments in any potential infrastructure package and the second expresses support for the “Pathway to Stable and Affordable Housing for All Act.” Signatories include leading national organizations from a wide range of sectors, such as the National Education Association, NAACP, Catholic Charities USA, Children’s HealthWatch, Food Research & Action Center, JustLeadershipUSA, NLIHC, and more.

In the [first letter](#), the campaign’s Steering Committee urges Congress to consider the following housing investments as part of a broader infrastructure package: at least \$5 billion for the national Housing Trust Fund (HTF), which provides block grants to the states to increase the supply of affordable homes for those with the greatest needs; at least \$15 billion to rehabilitate the public housing stock to preserve this asset for current tenants and future generations; and a targeted renters’ tax credit, which would reduce rents in state-designated housing developments to levels the lowest-income households can afford.

The [second letter](#) is addressed to the Senate and House sponsors of the “Pathway to Stable and Affordable Housing for All Act” (S.2946/H.R.5813), which would effectively end homelessness through full funding for rental assistance, robust investments in the HTF, and expanded funding for homelessness programs. The letter signatories expressed their strong support for the legislation and committed to helping advance it in Congress.

Also, in case you missed it from last week, nearly 50 multi-sector organizations from the campaign’s Steering Committee and Roundtable [urged](#) Congress to include emergency rental assistance funding in the legislative spending package aimed at addressing the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic.

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](#).

National Housing Week of Action

Our Homes, Our Voices National Housing Week of Action in May Cancelled Due to Coronavirus Pandemic

This year’s *Our Homes, Our Voices* National Housing Week of Action will not take place as scheduled May 2-12 due to public health concerns related to the coronavirus pandemic. It is clear the kinds of events and activities that make the National Housing Week of Action so powerful will be impossible to carry out given the pandemic, and our priorities for the foreseeable future must be to do all we can to ensure people experiencing homelessness and low-income renters, who are at grave risk during the pandemic, are protected.

Please reach out to your members of Congress about the critical importance of accessible, safe, and affordable homes for those most in need and tell them to take immediate action to protect people experiencing homelessness and low-income renters during this public health crisis. Visit NLIHC’s new [Legislative Action Center](#) and our policy [recommendations](#) to ensure housing stability for those most in need during the coronavirus pandemic.

Research

Freddie Mac Estimates Housing Shortage of 3.3 Million Homes

Freddie Mac released “[The Housing Supply Shortage: State of the States](#),” which finds that 29 states and the District of Columbia have a housing undersupply. The largest deficits of housing supply were found in the District of Columbia (with a deficit of 9.55%), Oregon (8.8%), and California (5.74%).

This state-level analysis is a follow-up to a [December 2018 report](#) that found that the housing market had not fully recovered from the Great Recession and that the nation’s housing supply was not meeting demand. In the previous report, Freddie Mac estimated a housing shortage of 2.5 million homes. This new report accounts for state-level variations and estimates the housing shortage on the basis of each state’s needs (since a surplus of housing on one side of the country does not compensate for deficits on the other). On the basis of this analysis, 29 states have a housing deficit, and the national deficit is 3.3 million homes.

The author uses U.S. Census Bureau data to estimate housing supply, which includes single-family homes, apartments, and manufactured homes in each state. The author estimates housing demand with a formula that considers (1) long-term vacancy rates and (2) an estimate of the target number of households if housing-cost constraints did not limit the formation of new households.

Freddie Mac estimates that over 400,000 additional households headed by 25- to 34-year-olds would have formed in 45 states and the District of Columbia, were it not for high housing costs that resulted in them choosing shared living arrangements or choosing to continue to live with their parents. These potential households are considered “missing households.” In general, states with lower vacancy rates have proportionally more missing households.

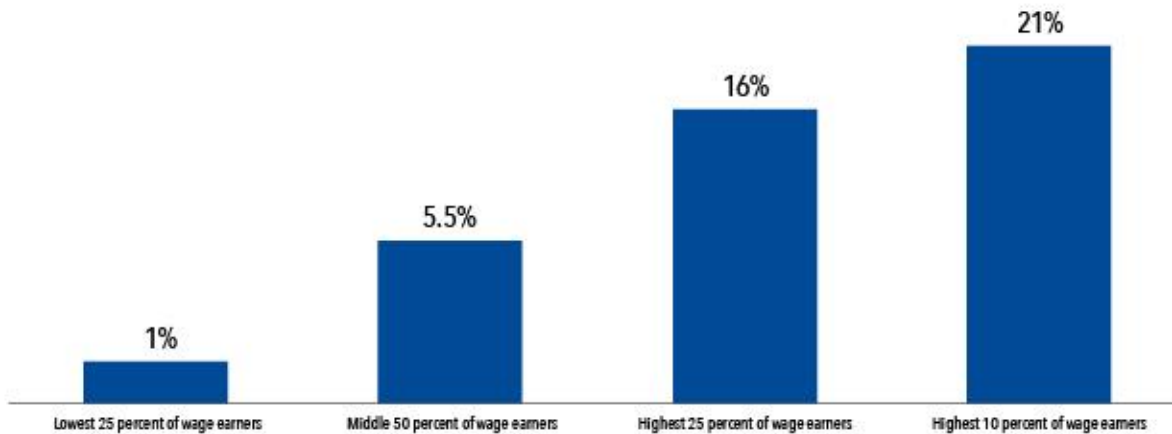
Subtracting estimated housing demand from housing supply provides an estimate of the housing deficit. Five states (Oregon, California, Minnesota, Florida, and Colorado) and the District of Columbia have a deficit of more than 5%, and 24 other states have an undersupply. The report estimates that 21 states are oversupplied, with the greatest oversupply in West Virginia and Arkansas. (It is worth emphasizing that this estimate does not take affordability and availability into consideration. NLIHC’s report [The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Homes](#) estimates that extremely low-income renters face a shortage of 7 million affordable and available homes nationwide, including a shortage of more than 24,000 affordable and available homes in West Virginia and a shortage of more than 55,000 affordable and available homes in Arkansas. Adequate housing exists, but extremely low-income renters cannot afford it.) Finally, the report estimates the impact of migration on states’ housing deficits.

The report can be accessed at: <https://bit.ly/2Why0Ne>

Fact of the Week

Few Low-Wage Employees Have Flexible/Work-from-Home Workplace Policies where They Work

Employees with formal flexible workplace policy (including ability to work from home), by income



Source: BLS, National Compensation Survey, March 2019. Surveyed occupations classified into wage categories based on average wage for occupation. Survey asked about flexible workplace benefits. Includes private industry and state and local government employees.

Source: BLS, National Compensation Survey, March 2019. Surveyed occupations classified into wage categories based on average wage for occupation. Survey asked about flexible workplace benefits. Includes private industry and state and local government employees.

Resource

Webinar on NLIHC’s Housing and Coronavirus Legislative Priorities Now Available

Hundreds of advocates joined a webinar on March 18 outlining NLIHC’s key legislative priorities for 2020, what more needs to be done by Congress to respond to the coronavirus pandemic, and what advocates can do to move these priorities forward. A recording of the webinar, “NLIHC 2020 Policy Priorities,” can be found at: <https://bit.ly/33v2bC5>

While the coronavirus pandemic canceled NLIHC’s annual Capitol Hill Day in DC this week, it is essential that advocates to continue to communicate to their members of Congress about the importance of accessible, safe, and affordable homes for people with the greatest need and the need for urgent federal action to protect people at the greatest risk during the coronavirus pandemic.

During “NLIHC 2020 Policy Priorities,” the NLIHC policy team discussed immediate homelessness and housing priorities during the pandemic, other key bills before Congress, and the specific asks advocates should make to their members of Congress. The NLIHC field team provided advocacy tips and tools for taking action on these issues, including NLIHC’s new Legislative Action Center – a one-stop-shop for information and advocacy resources to urge your members of Congress to champion affordable housing solutions for the lowest-income people.

To access the PowerPoint slides and a recording of the “NLIHC 2020 Policy Priorities” webinar, visit: <https://bit.ly/2wd1bGJ>

To access NLIHC’s recommendations to ensure housing stability during the coronavirus, visit:
<https://bit.ly/3988Nax>

Tax Strategies for Rural Affordable Housing Preservation

The Housing Assistance Council released “[Tax Considerations for Rural Housing Preservation](#),” which outlines strategies for avoiding adverse tax consequences that can prevent the preservation of rural affordable housing at the time of a sale. The paper suggests that changes in tax law, such as limiting depreciation recapture and tax liability at the time of a sale or providing tax credits for those who sell properties for the purpose of preservation, might ease efforts to preserve affordable rural rental housing.

Owners of USDA Section 515 developments may reduce their tax liability over time by claiming depreciation on the properties, but the government recaptures a portion of those deferred taxes when the property is sold. If the property has not appreciated in value, that tax liability may discourage the sale of such properties, which is a potential threat to their preservation as affordable rental housing. The report draws on Internal Revenue Service publications, congressional committee testimony, and interviews with tax attorneys and USDA officials familiar with preservation transactions. It explains how tax liabilities can arise on the sale of a property through depreciation recapture and debt forgiveness. The authors discuss potential tax strategies and tax relief options that could facilitate the sale of Section 515 properties for preservation.

The full paper can be accessed at: <https://bit.ly/38XKUCC>

Census

U.S. Census Bureau Responds to COVID-19 Outbreak

The U.S. Census Bureau [announced](#) on Saturday, March 21 that it was adapting or delaying some census operations in light of the coronavirus outbreak. Key adjustments include:

- The self-response phase is extended from July 31 to August 14.
- The start of the non-response follow up and re-interview is delayed, now starting on May 28 and going to August 14. This involves census takers interviewing households in person who have not responded online, by phone, or by mail.
- Service-Based Enumeration is delayed, now starting on April 29 and going to May 1. This census operation involves counting people who are experiencing homelessness by reaching out to service providers such as shelters, soup kitchens and regularly scheduled mobile food vans, and targeted outdoor locations (see *Memo*, [3/9](#)).
- Census takers also count people experiencing homelessness who are living under bridges, in parks, in all-night businesses, etc. This operation is delayed until May 1.
- Census takers count people living in transitory locations such as hotels, motels, RV parks, and campgrounds (see *Memo*, [3/9](#)). This operation is delayed to April 23 through May 18.

Previously, U.S. Census Bureau Director Steven Dillingham issued a [media release](#) on March 18 addressing operational updates in response to the coronavirus pandemic. Beginning March 18, in support of guidance on what can be done to help slow the spread of coronavirus, 2020 census field operations will be suspended for two weeks until April 1, 2020. The Census Bureau is taking this step to help protect the health and safety of the

public, Census Bureau employees, and everyone going through the hiring process for temporary census-taker positions.

Starting on May 28, census takers will begin visiting households that have not yet responded to the 2020 census to help complete the count. (As of the morning of March 18, more than eleven million households have responded.) The Census Bureau will continue to monitor the evolving COVID-19 outbreak and will adjust census-taker and survey operations as necessary in order to follow the guidance of federal, state, and local health authorities.

The public is strongly encouraged to respond to the 2020 census online using a desktop computer, laptop, smartphone, or tablet. The public can also respond by phone or mail. Everyone should respond to the 2020 census as soon as they receive their invitation.

In response to the Census Bureau announcement, the co-chairs of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights' Census Task Force [released a statement](#) agreeing that temporarily suspending field operations for the 2020 census is the right decision for now.

A Leadership Council email to advocates indicated that the suspension of field operations until April 1, 2020 will have the following impacts:

- The update/leave operation, which is the hand-delivery of census packets to about 6.6 million primarily rural households plus most (but not all) American Indian reservations, will be stopped and delayed. That operation had just started on March 16.
- Service-based Enumeration, which is one of the operations counting people experiencing homelessness, will be delayed; and
- The required fingerprinting of candidates applying for 2020 census jobs will be stopped, meaning that further on-boarding and training of new census field staff will be delayed.

During this period, households can still respond to the 2020 census and households in the update/leave universe that have not received their packets and want to respond can participate in the census using a non-ID response. It is critical to continue emphasizing the importance of responding to the census and how easy it is to do from home.

The email to advocates notes that the Census Bureau is able to make necessary adaptations as needed at the local level for special operations as well. By now, many households have received an invitation in the mail to complete the census. This was planned and continues uninterrupted by the coronavirus. In addition, the census website 2020Census.gov is live and can accept responses in English and 12 non-English languages or by calling phone questionnaire assistance at: <https://bit.ly/2U4NyCz>

The statement from the co-chairs was sent on March 18, before the Census Bureau issued the date adjustments and delays listed above on March 22. Therefore, the July 31 references are outdated; the date is now August 14. The March 18 co-chairs statement states that state and congressional leaders, along with some organizations, have begun calling for the census response period to be “extended” or “delayed” due to concerns about the potential impact of the health emergency on the count. “There are numerous and difficult consequences to delaying census operations, and significant implications for data quality and the accuracy of the results,” the co-chairs write. “Moreover, because households can self-respond until July 31, it is too soon to know whether such action is necessary. And we worry about the impact on self-response these early calls for an extension might have. We believe these issues must be fully discussed, understood, and considered by Congress in consultation with the Bureau, stakeholders, and experts.”

The statement continues, “The Census Bureau already has flexibility on extending the enumeration timeframe, which it had planned to conclude on July 31 under normal circumstances. The self-response period will provide the Census Bureau and stakeholders with information on how much additional time beyond July 31 may be needed. However, the further away from Census Day, April 1 (the date set in law) data are collected, the greater the impact on data quality and consistency, so these decisions must be made with consideration for the consequences.”

There are two deadlines for reporting decennial census data in statute, and Congress would need to pass legislation that the president would sign (or override a presidential veto) to change either one:

- First, the Census Bureau must report the state population totals used for congressional apportionment to the president by December 31, 2020, for the president to transmit to the clerk of the House of Representatives after the new Congress convenes in January.
- Second, the Census Bureau must transmit to each state its respective Redistricting Data Files (which are also made public) by April 1, 2021. The bureau does that on a rolling basis as the files are available and depending on the states that need the data first for off-year state legislative elections.

Moving back either of these deadlines would have a dramatic ripple-effect throughout the political system.

The co-chairs of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights’ Census Task Force are Arturo Vargas, CEO of NALEO Educational Fund, John C. Yang, president and executive director of Asian Americans Advancing Justice|AAJC, and Vanita Gupta, president and CEO of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights.

The March 21 Census Bureau adjusted and delayed information is at: <https://bit.ly/33HfUWG>

The Census Bureau’s March 18 media release is at: <https://bit.ly/3a1mWb7>

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights’ Census Task Force statement is at: <https://bit.ly/2WpFBJG>

The 2020 Census homepage is at: <https://bit.ly/3b7ITpZ>

The Leadership Conference’s special Census Counts website has a vast trove of resources at: <https://censuscounts.org>

Event for Residents

Tenant Talk Live Webinar: Responding to Coronavirus, April 6

[Join](#) resident leaders and NLIHC staff for the next *Tenant Talk Live* webinar to discuss the impacts of the coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic and how you can advocate for needed resources and other protections for people experiencing homelessness and low-income renters in your community. The next *Tenant Talk Live*—a bimonthly call/webinar with resident leaders from across the country—will take place on Monday, April 6 at 6:00 p.m. ET (5 p.m. CT, 4 p.m. MT, 3 p.m. PT).

NLIHC staff will provide updates on what is being done at the federal level to address the pandemic, discuss issues and efforts from around the country, share ways you can take action, and answer questions. NLIHC Board Member and Resident Caucus Member Shalonda Rivers will share what she and other members of her community are doing in South Florida to ensure their safety and security during the coronavirus pandemic.

Tenant Talk Live provides opportunities for residents to **connect** with NLIHC and one another, to **share** best practices, and to **learn** how to be more involved in influencing federal housing policies and to lead in their community.

NLIHC is committed to connecting and engaging with resident leaders in new, more robust ways. If you are a low-income resident and have a topic you would like to propose for peer-sharing or if you want to be a speaker on an upcoming call/webinar, please email us at: karbuckle@nlihc.org

Register for *Tenant Talk Live* at: <https://bit.ly/2vEFS0o>

From the Field

Oakland Voters Expand Homeless Services by Passing Measure Q

Voters in Oakland, CA, went to the ballot once again to increase their own taxes in support of ending homelessness. Measure Q passed with 68.08% of the vote, exceeding the super-majority threshold of 66.67%. The vote took place on March 3, but the close nature of the result delayed a declaration of the outcome. Measure Q authorizes the City of Oakland to move forward with a land parcel tax that will generate an estimated \$21 million annually to support parks, recreation, permanent housing, and homelessness services.

The parcel tax instituted by Measure Q will charge \$148 annually for single-family parcels and \$101.08 for multi-family residential parcels, placing the largest burdens on owners of homes in the lowest-density neighborhoods. The parcel tax will vary for commercial properties based on frontage and square footage. There is a specific exemption for low-income elderly property owners.

The ordinance approved by Measure Q specifically states the City of Oakland's authority to collect revenue through the parcel tax requires at least the maintenance of current funding levels for homeless services. This provision ensures the new funds authorized by Measure Q will augment, rather than replace, current funding for addressing homelessness.

Funding through the parcel tax will be allocated to parks and recreation at 64%, services to address water quality and litter reduction at 5%, and audits of the revenue usage at 1%, with the remainder being allocated to reducing homelessness. The estimated \$6.3 million for homelessness will be divided between temporary shelter, transitional or supportive housing, and permanent housing. The City of Oakland can elect to increase the parcel tax each year by either the workforce increase in the San Francisco Bay Area as calculated by the U.S. Department of Labor or the change in California's per-capita personal income as determined by the California Department of Finance.

The measure was advanced by the "Yes on Q" campaign, a broad movement of multi-sector partners. Advocates were optimistic about passage from the outset, but significant spending by opponents resulted in the vote coming in very close to the super-majority threshold. Political action committees supported by the National Association of Realtors and corporate landlords spent more than \$100,000 on a direct mail campaign to oppose the measure on the grounds that it unduly increased tax burdens. In the end, the grim reality of public homelessness in Oakland made a strong case for increasing resources.

For more information about Measure Q, visit the Yes on Q website at: yesforoakland.com

NLIHC in the News

NLIHC in the News for the Week of March 15

The following are some of the news stories that NLIHC contributed to during the week of March 15:

- “Most renters won't receive protections under Trump proposal,” *Associated Press*, March 20 at: <https://tinyurl.com/r3jmx9e>
- “Social distancing, coronavirus quarantines for homeless people in King County could cost \$260M, report says,” *The Seattle Times*, March 20 at: <https://tinyurl.com/rnukuyr>
- “Racing to Head Off Evictions and Foreclosures,” *The New York Times* March 18 at: <https://tinyurl.com/tmc3don>
- “Coronavirus Could Crush the Poor, Advocates Warn,” *US News & World Report*, March 19 at: <https://tinyurl.com/ucomn78>
- “HUD, Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac and growing list of cities suspend evictions because of coronavirus,” *Market Place*, March 18 at: <https://tinyurl.com/vxm8hrl>
- “Fears mount about impact of coronavirus on homeless,” *The Washington Post*, March 15 at: <https://tinyurl.com/uurenq8>

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