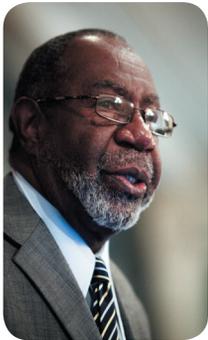


Letter from the Chairman

Welcome back, readers!



George Moses
NLIHC Board of
Directors, Chairman

On behalf of everyone at the National Low Income Housing Coalition, I am proud to present our second issue of *Tenant Talk*.

The first issue of this NLIHC newsletter came out last October.

We are very excited to continue

to publish *Tenant Talk* for residents of public housing, Section 8 voucher holders, residents of federally assisted housing, and anyone and everyone interested in low income housing issues.

This issue of *Tenant Talk* includes thoughts from residents on our recent Annual Housing Policy Conference and Lobby Day, discussion of the Section 3 program, and information about NLIHC's new report, *Out of Reach*, which I believe will help you be an even better advocate.

I hope you enjoy this issue. Let us know what you think!

Yours in advocacy,
George Moses



NLIHC Board of Directors,
Chairman

SECTION 3: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



What is SECTION 3?

Section 3 is part of the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968. This act created some new housing programs and changed others.

The purpose of Section 3 is to ensure that jobs and other economic opportunities created when HUD assists housing and community development projects go to low income people "to the greatest extent feasible."

Section 3 does not require the creation of jobs for low income people. Sometimes, HUD dollars result in hiring additional people. Then, recipients must give "preference" to low income people for those extra jobs.

There are two Section 3 categories. Each category has different requirements, depending on which program provides the money. One category is public housing programs. The other category is all other housing and community development programs, like CDBG and HOME.

CDBG is a block grant to cities, urban counties, and states that can be used for many different housing and community development activities. HOME is another block grant to states and some cities that can only be used for housing. HOME cannot be used for public housing.

Employment Goals

The "recipients" of HUD funding can be local governments, state governments, or public housing agencies (PHAs) and their contractors and subcontractors. Sometimes these recipients have new jobs. These jobs will be at housing or community development projects funded by HUD. When this happens, Section 3 says they must, "to the greatest extent feasible," try to reach minimum goals for filling those "new hires" with "Section 3 residents." A Section 3 resident is generally a public housing resident or a low income person living in a project's metro area or non-metro county.

Section 3 has two levels of goals. A goal of 30% of new hires applies to public housing capital improvements and operating funds. This includes non-construction jobs and construction jobs. It also applies to non-housing construction jobs, like street improvement work. These jobs come mostly from CDBG. A second goal of 10% of new construction hires applies to other HUD programs to rehab or build housing, like HOME and CDBG.

The hiring goals for non-public housing do not kick in until a minimum amount of HUD money is in a project. This is called a "threshold" amount. There is no "threshold" for public housing. Most HOME and CDBG single-family housing projects do not have to comply with Section 3 because of the way HUD uses the threshold.

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Learn more
about housing
policy & what's
happening on
Capitol Hill.



In-depth info on
housing policy
& programs
from a research
perspective.



Get the
facts
& take
action!

PUBLIC HOUSING LEGISLATION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR RESIDENTS?



If you live in public housing, then you know that it is an important resource for many American families. But you might not know how public housing is funded, or that big changes might be coming to the way public housing is run. It's time to get educated.

Public housing is funded by two main subsidies from Congress: operating and capital. Along with residents' rent payments, these two subsidies are supposed to give public housing agencies (PHAs) what they need to operate and maintain their units. Operating funds provide for the day-to-day operations of the PHA, including utilities and staff salaries. Capital funds provide for bigger-ticket items, such as elevators, heating and air conditioning systems, and roofs.

While most public housing units are well maintained, many units need repair, and that costs money. When units and entire buildings are in bad shape, it is harder for the PHA to pay for the repairs. It also becomes easier for PHAs to get rid of that public housing legally.

Since the mid-1990s, the country has lost more than 165,000 public housing apartments. These are homes and whole communities that were not replaced with other apartments. For a long time, PHAs have not had enough funding from the federal government to make repairs. Nationally, repairs that will cost between \$22 billion and \$30 billion cannot be made due to lack of funds. PHAs often do not receive enough funding to operate the units on a day-to-day basis, either.

HUD wants PHAs to look for private loans to preserve public housing. New project-based contracts could help PHAs pay off those loans. Letting PHAs convert public housing could preserve apartments. But any conversions should be done with strong requirements that protect residents, ensure resident participation, and make sure the public housing remains a public asset for the long term.

Congress will consider HUD's proposal as it decides the federal budget for 2012. The U.S. House and Senate have a lot of power over the future of public housing. The conversation is happening right now. Public housing residents need to be involved.

Many residents and their partners believe that this new kind of public housing program must do four things:

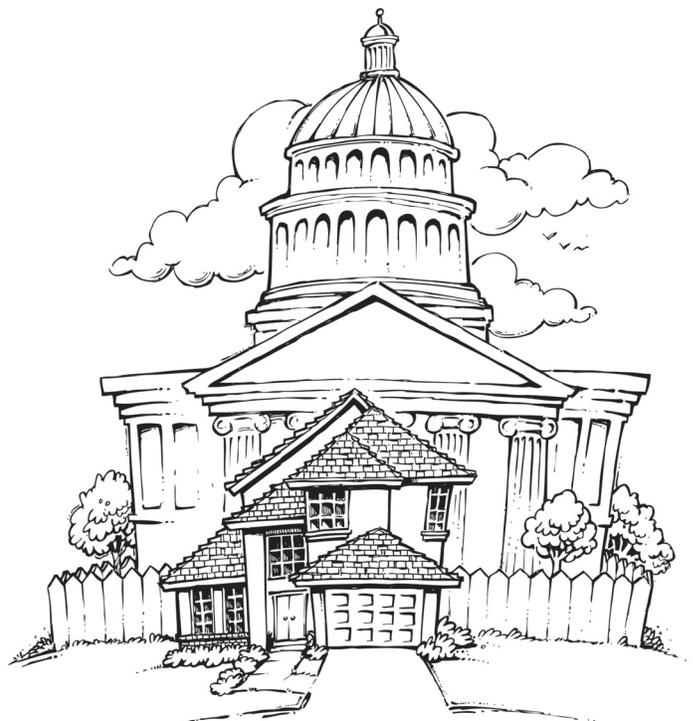
- 1) Preserve public housing.
- 2) Have long-term contracts that must get renewed.
- 3) Maintain public ownership.
- 4) Protect the individual and collective rights of residents.

Any "conversion" demonstration project must also give residents the right to move with tenant-based vouchers if they want. The converted public housing units must stay subsidized, even if residents leave with vouchers.

Representative Keith Ellison (D-MN) previously introduced legislation that will allow public housing to be converted. He has said he will bring this bill up again this year. Mr. Ellison has also said he will make sure residents can support this bill.

Public housing will face many challenges in Congress this year. The House will probably try to put time limits on housing assistance. They will also probably try to impose work requirements for some assisted households. We must be ready to fight such policy proposals and to support full funding for public housing.

Do you want to get involved in advocacy for public housing? Contact the NLIHC Outreach Team at outreach@nlihc.org, or call **202-662-1530** and ask to speak with the outreach associate for your state.



WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE VOUCHER PROGRAM?



Housing Choice Vouchers serve the largest number of families of all HUD housing programs. Researchers study everything from how effectively the program provides housing to whether it improves tenant health. NLIHC has long kept tabs on the voucher research. Read on to learn what we know right now.

Tenants will not be surprised to learn that researchers find that the Housing Choice Voucher program is popular with tenants and lawmakers. It provides housing for extremely low income people that is less costly than public or other project-based housing.



Vouchers also give tenants choices of where to live. Researchers have found that tenants often use vouchers to help them move to new neighborhoods. But sometimes tenants' choices are limited.

Research shows clearly what many people with vouchers know from experience: vouchers are not accepted by some landlords. In many housing markets, there is clear discrimination against vouchers and voucher holders, many of whom are people of color. Another problem is that many communities simply do not have enough rental housing where tenants can use their vouchers. Apartments in many communities just cost too much to rent, even with a voucher.

Some tenants have found ways to work around these issues. One interesting recent finding comes from a study in Florida that found voucher households often use their vouchers in traditional project-based housing such as Low Income Housing Tax Credits. Since tax credit projects receive federal assistance, they must accept vouchers.

Not all tenants use vouchers to change neighborhoods. The research finds that many households choose to live in or near familiar neighborhoods rather than move to distant neighborhoods, even if those neighborhoods might have more opportunities.

DID YOU KNOW?

Today the Housing Choice Voucher Program serves nearly 5 million extremely low income people, in 2 million households, making it the nation's largest federal low income housing program.

It is not known if that is good or bad. While the research shows that growing up in a poor neighborhood can cause many disadvantages for children, there is too little research to conclude that simply moving to a higher income community improves children's prospects for better lives.

For the voucher program to truly help tenants, more must be done to end discrimination against voucher holders. Work must also be done to increase the amount of housing where tenants can use vouchers. This housing must be in a broad range of neighborhoods.

More information about vouchers is available at www.nlihc.org.

HELP US MAKE *TENANT TALK* EVEN BETTER

NLIHC wants to hear from you. Tell us what you would like to read about in the next issue of *Tenant Talk*.

The NLIHC Outreach team will be contacting some of our *Tenant Talk* readers soon to get their feedback. You just might get a call!

We don't just want your feedback on *Tenant Talk*. We want you to get involved and stay involved in housing advocacy. We can provide you with the information you need to join NLIHC and become an even stronger advocate for housing.

Our mission is only made possible through your membership, advocacy and interaction. We look forward to speaking with you and getting your feedback! If you don't hear from us, feel free to give our Outreach Team a call at **202-662-1530** and ask for the Outreach Associate for your state. Or, send them an email at outreach@nlihc.org.



In Memoriam: Anne R. Bradshaw



Ms. Anne Bradshaw, a long-time housing advocate who passed away last fall, was recently recognized at NLIHC's conference for her devotion to fighting for safe, decent and affordable housing for all.

Anne R. Bradshaw was originally from New Orleans, Louisiana, but lived for many years in New York City. Her dedication to low income housing advocacy impacted the lives of many people not just in New York City, but across the country.

Ms. Bradshaw founded Teamwork Action for Tenants in 1975 and was president of her tenant association at the Robert A. Taft Houses. Ms. Bradshaw also held the office of Financial Secretary with the District Council of Presidents, Manhattan North, and served as the chairperson of the Harlem Public Housing Scholarship Fund's Community Advisory Committee.

“Ms. Bradshaw never missed a conference, or the opportunity to give the Coalition new ideas about the work we needed to do. Her activism will certainly be missed.”

- NLIHC President Sheila Crowley

Ms. Bradshaw co-founded the New York City Public Housing Resident Alliance in 1995, and became chairperson in 2000. Over the years she oversaw a wide range of volunteer services like youth programs, voter registration, food and clothing drives, and programs for seniors.

Ms. Bradshaw was an active voice for tenant protections and rights on a wide range of issues, locally and federally. Ms. Bradshaw strongly opposed the community service requirements for public housing tenants proposed in Representative Rick Lazio's (R-NY) Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998, calling it “forced labor” and a “punitive attack on residents, an unfair and gratuitous intrusion into our lives, unprecedented in federal housing policy.” In 2002, Representative Charles Rangel (D-NY) successfully introduced an amendment blocking implementation of community service requirements.

Ms. Bradshaw consistently made an effort to get young people involved in housing issues, and many considered her a mentor. One such mentee recalls that Ms. Bradshaw “knew who to meet, and where to go.”

Ms. Bradshaw was a long-time member of NLIHC and a regular participant in NLIHC's annual conference. She will be missed.

IS TENANT TALK FOR ME?

Who is a tenant? Who is a resident? Is *Tenant Talk* for me? These are questions some of our readers might have.

A dictionary will tell you that a tenant is a person who rents his or her home. When the NLIHC refers to tenants, we mean tenants who use vouchers or other housing assistance to rent an apartment or a house, as well as low income people who rent private market housing. If you are a tenant, *Tenant Talk* is for you.

When the NLIHC refers to residents, we mean people who live in public housing or other project-based federally assisted housing. If you are a resident of public or assisted housing, *Tenant Talk* is for you.

Tenant Talk covers issues that are of concern to both tenants and residents. But we hope it can help anyone who cares about housing issues become an even better advocate for low income housing.

INTERVIEW WITH: LEONARD WILLIAMS

Member of the NLIHC Board of Directors



Leonard, tell us where your passion for advocacy comes from.

I currently live in one of the public housing developments in Buffalo, New York and have been active with our Tenant council for the past four years. I really believe that I am following in the footsteps of my mother, who was also an activist, so it's kind of a tradition in my family.

NLIHC board member Leonard Williams

How did you first get involved with NLIHC?

A friend of mine who was a resident commissioner for the Housing Authority convinced our executive director to send residents to the NLIHC Conference. He convinced me to be one of those residents, and I have attended every year since. Eventually I was asked to be part of the NLIHC Board. Then I was asked to be on the NLIHC Board Executive Committee. Over time, I just kept getting more and more involved.

How has your conference experience changed over the years?

Over time, more and more residents have tuned in to the work that the Coalition is doing. In response, many of the workshops have become more focused on resident issues. These workshops answer questions that the residents have, or didn't even know they had!

What type of questions?

Such as, "What is Section 3?" Residents this year were able to come to D.C. and jump in the conversation and ask that very question. In fact, an entire workshop session was devoted to this very topic.

What are the issues that you feel the most passionate about working on?

What is happening with the budget is certainly a big issue. The cuts that are being considered and taking place cause a great deal of concern to everyone.

Also, there is a lot of money being spent by HUD when it comes to Section 3. Residents want the opportunity to benefit from some of this money. They need access to jobs

now. The emphasis [at housing agencies and businesses that get money from HUD] has been on doing the minimum [by giving preference to low income people for just 30% of new hires] and this focus needs to change. Residents are now understanding Section 3 and using it as a tool. They can go to their housing authority and tell them they need jobs.

You mentioned Section 3 as an issue you feel passionate about. What is the most important thing for residents to know about Section 3?

Most importantly, what the definition of Section 3 really is. There is a lot of discussion about filling the requirement to the extent feasible. In my book, if you have 100 jobs and 100 people able to work, than this is the amount feasible.

What it has been interpreted as is this: once you meet that 30% quota, than that is what is feasible. You have done what you are supposed to do and now you can just ignore Section 3. Well, I'm sorry but that is not the greatest extent feasible. Passing this definition along will be a great service and residents should participate in informing one another.

"Information is Empowering."

- Leonard Williams

Do you think getting involved with NLIHC is a valuable experience for residents and tenants?

Absolutely. The real beauty of the Coalition is that we are grounded in research. NLIHC provides accurate information that residents can take to the bank. This information is fact, across the board. I can get answers on what HUD and Congress are saying and also better understand regulations.

The Coalition also provides a stage, and an opportunity for information gathering. I love the fact that we learn that HUD is looking for comment on an issue and we can come together and work on that, especially in the area of resident satisfaction.

What advice can you give to others who want to improve their housing?

It is all about information because information is empowering. We all need to work together to push out information to one another. That's why I love *Tenant Talk*, and the Conference. It allows residents to inform themselves and others. My one piece of advice is to take advantage of what NLIHC is providing by reading *Tenant Talk*, attending the conference and continuing to pass information along.

NLIHC CONFERENCE: RESIDENTS' PERSPECTIVE



NLIHC Intern Alex Hodor-Lee, Diane Fox and Ira Westlund plan their next moves at the NLIHC conference.

Ira Westlund of Moline, Illinois is no stranger to the hardships that low income people face. As a low income resident of public housing, Westlund decided to take action and attend the National Low Income Housing Coalition's 2011 Annual Housing Policy Conference and Lobby Day with the Moline Housing Authority. Westlund hoped that by attending NLIHC's conference, he would learn more about the housing issues most important to him.

Westlund is on Moline Housing Authority's Resident Advisory Board and is always trying to learn more about resident issues. "I want to learn about housing issues related to the elderly, and also healthcare," said Westlund.

He made sure to attend workshops focusing on those issues, such as "New and Proposed Reforms to the Section 202 Housing for the Elderly."

As a man who spent years battling homelessness, one of Westlund's personal concerns was, "Can we age in one spot without moving?"

Westlund was eager to travel from Illinois to Washington, D.C. for the opportunity to ask such questions in a meeting with Representative Bobby Schilling's (R-IL) office on Lobby Day. Being able to raise his concerns is important to Westlund, who above all believes, "Housing has to be the number one priority."

**SAVE
THE
DATE**

We're already hard at work planning the 2012 Housing Policy Conference, which will be held on **March 25-28** in Washington, DC. Don't miss your chance to register and take advantage of special rates for members.

Email outreach@nlihc.org or call **202-662-1530** and ask to speak to the Outreach Associate for your state to get on the list to learn more about next year's conference.

Diane Fox also traveled to D.C. from Moline, Illinois for her fourth time attending NLIHC's conference. As a member of her public housing agency's (PHA) Resident Advisory Board, she has the opportunity to attend the conference each year. "I am thankful that my PHA knows it is important to send residents to take advantage of the learning opportunities here," said Fox. "You have no idea how empowered I feel after attending."

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SECTION 3: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

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Other Economic Opportunities

Recipients also must, "to the greatest extent feasible," give contracting preferences to businesses that are primarily owned by or that employ a large number of Section 3 residents. There are goals and preferences for this too.

Issues

Section 3 has not lived up to its potential. Jurisdictions and PHAs do not always take it seriously. Until recently HUD has not enforced Section 3. But in 2009, HUD started taking steps to improve. It sent letters to 3,500 state and local governments and PHAs requiring them to submit Section 3 compliance reports within 30 days or face penalties. Shortly after, 75% complied. Also, HUD is providing more Section 3 training for its field offices.

HUD's Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO) runs Section 3. Any Section 3 resident can file a complaint. This complaint should be in writing. It can be sent to the HUD Regional Office (<http://www.hud.gov/offices/fheo/aboutfheo/fhhubs.cfm#top>). It can also be sent to HUD Headquarters.

Changes Proposed in Congress

Representative Nydia Velazquez (D-NY) wrote a bill to improve Section 3. Her bill would create a separate Section 3 office at HUD. The bill would also require that HUD funding recipients have staff to check on Section 3 compliance.

Residents should urge their representative to support Rep. Velazquez's Earnings and Living Opportunity Act. They should also meet with their PHAs and local governments to remind them of the responsibility to fulfill their employment and training responsibilities under Section 3.

For more information, check out the article on Section 3 on page 187 of the *2011 Advocates' Guide to Housing and Community Development Policy*. Find it at www.nlihc.org.

GET THE FACTS!



Are Apartments in Your Community *Out of Reach*?

Why is it so hard to find an affordable apartment? NLIHC research shows that one important reason is that rents far exceed what many working people can afford.

The NLIHC released *Out of Reach 2011* on May 2. This report calculates the Housing Wage. The Housing Wage is the hourly wage a family needs to earn to be able to afford rent and utilities on a modest, two-bedroom apartment in their community.

In 2011, the national housing wage is \$18.46. This means that on average, a renter in the United States must earn \$18.46 an hour, working 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year, with no vacations or missed days, to be assured of being able to afford a modest two-bedroom home.

Minimum-wage workers who earn just \$7.25 an hour would have to work more than two full time jobs, or 101 hours a week, to afford a two-bedroom home without any additional assistance.

NLIHC estimates even **the average renter earns only \$13.52 an hour.** Wages actually fell for renters since last year as a result of the poor economy. This year the average renter needs to work 55 hours a week to afford the fair market rent nationwide.

Out of Reach also looks at the rent that households at a range of other income levels can afford. For example, in most states those on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) can only afford a monthly rent of \$202. This is \$758 below the national average fair market rent of \$960 for a two-bedroom unit, and \$510 below the average fair market rent of \$712 for a studio efficiency apartment.

You can learn all about *Out of Reach* and find out what the Housing Wage is in your state, metropolitan area, or rural county by going to the *Out of Reach* webpage at www.nlihc.org/oor/oor2011 or by calling our research staff.

NLIHC CONFERENCE: RESIDENTS' PERSPECTIVE

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This year, Fox went to many workshops including the PHA Budget session. There, she took notes and asked questions about the inner workings of the budget process.

“I never even thought to consider power of attorney or to look for year-to-year change. This is knowledge that I can take back as ammunition.”

Fox explained that each year she brings information back to her fellow residents. “What I learn here is not just for me. I too am helping people find and keep their housing,” said Fox. “I could even get a job back in Moline based on what I have gained from this conference experience.”

Fox is already planning her trip to D.C. for next year.

Get *Tenant Talk* delivered to your home!

If you received Tenant Talk from a neighbor or colleague, please fill out the form below to receive it directly.

Name _____

Mailing Address _____

City, State, ZIP _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Are you involved in a local tenant association? Yes No

Name of Organization _____

Do you: live in public housing live in assisted housing
 have a Section 8 voucher other

Mail to: NLIHC, 727 15th Street #600, Washington, DC, 20005
You can also email outreach@nlihc.org (subject: *Tenant Talk*)
or call **202-662-1530 x316** to be put on the list. Thank you!



727 Fifteenth Street NW, Sixth Floor
Washington, DC 20005



ABOUT NLIHC

The National Low Income Housing Coalition is dedicated solely to achieving socially just public policy that assures people with the lowest incomes in the United States have affordable and decent homes. Established in 1974 by Cushing N. Dolbeare, NLIHC educates, organizes, and advocates to ensure decent, affordable housing within healthy neighborhoods for everyone.

Contact NLIHC. Your first point of contact at NLIHC is your Outreach Associate. NLIHC's Outreach Associates are members' direct contacts for answers to federal policy or membership questions. NLIHC's Outreach Associates are each assigned to specific states. Email outreach@nlihc.org or call Elisha Harig-Blaine at **202-662-1530 x316** to be put in touch with your Outreach Associate today!

Become a Member. Join NLIHC today to stay informed about affordable housing issues, keep in touch with advocates around the country, and support NLIHC's work. Residents of public or assisted housing or other self-identified low income individuals can join for \$3 a year. Resident association memberships are \$10 per year.

Join at www.nlihc.org/join. You can also e-mail us at outreach@nlihc.org or call **202-662-1530**.

Photo Credit: Momenta Creative pages 1, 4, 5 and 6.

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