



Season's Greetings!

The holiday season is always a time of sharing, and NLIHC has several new and exciting things to share with you in this winter issue of *Tenant Talk*!

It is never too early to prepare for the upcoming elections. We have some helpful resources to get you started. Read the articles on pages one and two to learn more.

We love the feedback our readers share with us. You'll find it featured in our new "Dear Tenant Talk" column on page three.



As always, I encourage you to share *Tenant Talk* with your friends, neighbors and coworkers. We especially appreciate your help spreading the word about our Annual Housing Policy Conference in March. Check out page three for news about conference speakers.

I look forward to seeing each and every *Tenant Talk* reader at the conference next year!

All of us at NLIHC wish you a joyful holiday season and a happy new year.

Yours in advocacy,



George Moses, Chair
NLIHC Board of Directors

ELECTION 2012: OUR VOTE, OUR VOICE, OUR FUTURE



Next November, Americans will vote in a major election. The presidential election is in 2012. All seats in the House and many in the Senate are also up for a vote. State legislatures and local offices will have seats on the ballot as well. Eleven states will elect a governor. In some communities, there are special elections, too.

The 2012 election is very important. Unfortunately, statistics show that low income people and renters are not as likely to vote as wealthy people and homeowners. But elected leaders have a big impact on everyone's life. If we care about housing and homelessness, we need to vote.

Now is the time to make a promise to yourself that you will not let anything stop you, your family, or your neighbors from voting in 2012.

Here are some steps to get started:

1. **Visit www.Vote411.org** to learn how to register to vote in your state.
2. **Register to vote!** Even if you think you are already registered, if you have moved in the last three years, you should register again under your new address. If your state allows, become a permanent absentee voter. This lets you vote at home and mail in your ballot or put it in a convenient drop box. This makes voting easier.
3. **Learn what is on the ballot in your state.** Visit www.Vote411.org regularly for updated information on your local elections.
4. **Locate your polling place.** If you are not an absentee voter, you will need to vote in person. Check your voter registration card or visit the Vote411 website for poll locations.
5. **Remember to vote on Tuesday, November 6, 2012!** Mark your calendar. Make a date with family or friends to remind each other to vote. If you know you will need a ride to the polls, make sure to ask a family member or friend ahead of time, and remind them of the date.

If you are already a regular voter, there is more you can do.

- **Spread the word.** Talk to your friends, family and neighbors about the election. Ask them if they are registered to vote, and offer to help them do so if they are not.
- **Volunteer or work at a polling place.** Contact your local board of elections to learn how.
- **Volunteer with a candidate or issue campaign that interests you.** It is a great way to meet people and learn about the electoral process.

Organizations like resident associations, public housing agencies, and community centers can play a role in making sure low income people vote. NLIHC's Voterization Project helps these organizations plan voter registration, education and mobilization activities that are the right fit for them. Want to get your resident or tenant group involved? Learn more about Voterization at www.nlihc.org/vote.

Contact our Outreach Team to learn more about voting at **202.662.1530** or by email at outreach@nlihc.org

TIMES ARE CHANGING: ENCOURAGING TRENDS IN VOTING RATES AMONG MINORITIES AND RENTERS



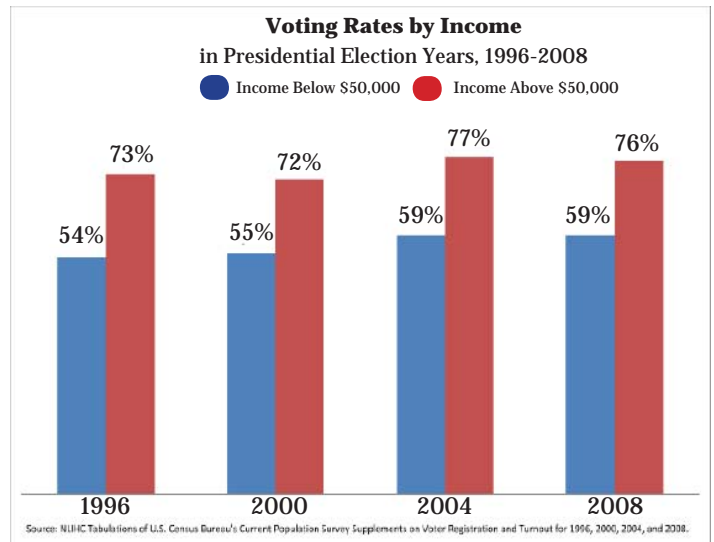
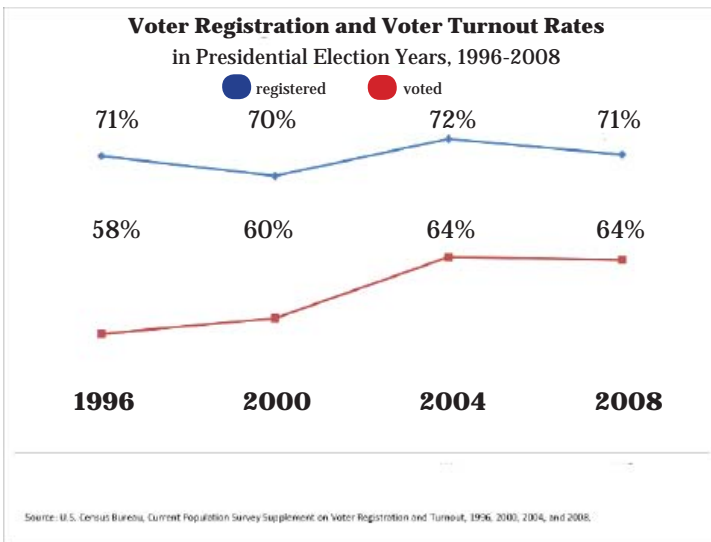
Voting is good for individuals, for communities and for American democracy. Communities with large numbers of voters have a better chance of getting their concerns heard by elected officials and candidates. Unfortunately, it is often in neighborhoods with the greatest need that voter turnout rates are lowest.

There is good news. In the 2008 presidential election, voter turnout among minorities, renters and people ages 18-29 was higher than in the previous three presidential elections. But there is still room for improvement. Here are some quick facts from the United States Census Bureau about voter turnout in recent presidential elections:

Voting is good for individuals, for communities and for American democracy.

- Overall, 71% of U.S. citizens were registered to vote in 2008, but only 64% actually voted in the election.
- People with higher incomes are more likely to vote. In 2008, 76% of people earning over \$50,000 cast a ballot while only 59% of those earning below \$50,000 did so.
- White and African-Americans had nearly equal voter turnout rates in 2008, with 66% of whites and 65% of blacks voting.
- The voter turnout among African-Americans has increased steadily since 1996, from just 53% in 1996 to a high of 65% in 2008.
- There were more Hispanic and Asian voters in 2008 than in the past three presidential elections.
- The percentage of renters voting in presidential elections increased from 42% in 1996 to 52% in 2008. This is still far below the voter rate among homeowners of 68% in 2008.

Do not let your busy schedule stop you from making your voice heard. Take a look at the article on page one for tips on exercising your right to vote. We need to work together to keep voting rates on the rise in 2012!



LEARN MORE! VOTING RIGHTS AND CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS

According to the ACLU, over five million Americans are unable to vote because of laws that prevent people with past felony convictions from voting. Called *felon disenfranchisement*, these laws often target people of color.

Laws vary from state to state. Your state may allow people with felony convictions to vote. Do not assume that you are not allowed to vote. Learn about your rights. Visit the ACLU website to learn more:

www.aclu.org/voting-rights/voter-disfranchisement

DEAR TENANT TALK...

A Conversation with Our Readers

Dear *Tenant Talk*,

Great work on *Tenant Talk*! I found the most recent issue very informative. I have a question that I was hoping NLIHC might be able to answer. Sometimes the management in assisted housing prevents residents from gathering together to talk about problems in our homes. I would like to see more information about what rights we have as residents to organize in order to improve the conditions we live in. What are our rights as residents?

- A.G., Minnetoka, MN

Dear A.G.,

The law is on your side. In HUD-assisted housing, regulations require private owners and managers to recognize tenant unions or organizing committees that meet regularly. HUD's rules also include the right for tenants to leaflet, door-knock, post notices, and convene meetings without management present and without prior notice to, or permission from, management. Tenants can also invite outside organizations to assist them.

See the chapter on "Resident Participation" in our annual *Advocate's Guide to Housing and Community Development Policy* for more information at nlihc.org. You can also search online for "24 CFR Part 245." This is the part of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) that spells out these rights. HUD published a short pamphlet, *Resident Rights and Responsibilities*, which includes this information. It is available at <http://1.usa.gov/6Aq3Kv>.

We want to hear your voice! Share your thoughts on this issue. Tell us what you want to read in future issues of Tenant Talk. Share what you are working on in your community.

Write to us at *Dear Tenant Talk*, 727 15th St NW, 6th Floor, Washington, D.C. 20005. You can also send an email to outreach@nlihc.org with "Dear Tenant Talk" in the subject line.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

NLIHC's 2012 Housing Policy Conference and Lobby Day is March 25-28, 2012

Join your fellow residents from across the nation in Washington, D.C. at NLIHC's 2012 Housing Policy Conference and Lobby Day! The 2012 conference will be held Sunday, March 25 to Wednesday, March 28. Hear leading Administration, HUD, and Congressional officials discuss the latest in housing policy. Take part in a wide range of workshops that will help you bring about positive change close to home.

We are pleased to announce that Pulitzer Prize-winning author Eugene Robinson will speak on Monday, March 26. A *Washington Post* columnist and MSNBC political analyst, Eugene Robinson uses his twice-weekly column to pick American society apart and then put it back together again. Mr. Robinson will share his thoughts on the intersection of affordable housing and the trends reshaping our society at the national and local level.

Registration begins January 4. Public housing agencies (PHAs) get \$25 per unit to pay for resident participation activities, which include helping residents be informed about issues that affect them and their community. Ask your resident council, RAB, or PHA to support resident attendance at the NLIHC conference.

Visit www.nlihc.org for regular updates. Watch your email and mailbox for more information as the conference nears.



*NLIHC Conference Speaker
Eugene Robinson*

DO YOU NEED ID TO REGISTER OR VOTE?



In many states, the law requires that you have a government-issued picture ID in order to register to vote. Many states require you to bring this ID to the polls when you vote.

These laws are supposed to prevent voter fraud. In fact, these laws simply make it harder for certain people to vote: low income people, people of color, young people, people with disabilities, and the elderly. People in these groups are much less likely to have an official ID.

Learn the laws in your state so you can be prepared when you register and vote. Visit www.Vote411.org and click on "Voting In Your State" to learn about your state law.

WE'RE LOOKING FOR A FEW GREAT RESIDENT ORGANIZATIONS!

Nominate a tenant group for NLIHC's first Resident Organizing Award! Tell us about a tenant association or resident council that has successfully organized to improve building conditions, influence local, state, or federal policy, preserved affordability, or achieved another significant victory. You can even nominate your own group! We will present the award at our Annual Housing Policy Conference & Lobby Day, March 25-28, 2012. For more information, and to learn about eligibility criteria, contact Mary Kolar at outreach@nlihc.org or **202-662-1530 x233**.

727 Fifteenth Street NW, Sixth Floor
Washington, D.C. 20005



Nominate your resident or tenant group for our first-ever Resident Organizing Award! Details on page 3.

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**.



Follow @NLIHC on Twitter!



Become a fan of NLIHC on Facebook!

NLIHC STAFF

Elina Bravve Research Assistant, x244
Sarah Brundage Communications Associate, x246
Lauren Cartwright Outreach/MSW Intern, x229
Amy Clark Communications Director, x227
Linda Couch Senior Vice President of Policy and Research, x228
Sheila Crowley President, x224
Megan DeCrappeo Bolton Senior Research Analyst, x245
Shannon Faulk Executive Assistant, x224
Ed Gramlich Regulatory Director, x314
Patrice Guillory Outreach Associate, x222
Elisha Harig-Blaine Director of Outreach, x316
Mary Kolar Outreach Associate x233
Sham Manglik Policy Analyst, x243
Taylor Materio Communications Consultant
Amy McDonald Policy Intern, x252
Khara Norris Director of Administration, x242
Melissa Quirk Senior Policy Analyst, x230
Bill Shields Vice President of Operations, x232
Aubrey Sozer Communications Intern, x250
Jennifer Spanos Communications Intern, x241
Matt Sumrak Outreach Intern, x223
La'Teashia Sykes Senior Outreach Associate, x247
Girma Syoume Research Intern, x249