

MEMO OF MEMBERS

The Weekly Newsletter of the National Low Income Housing Coalition

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Capitol Hill

VA-HUD Appropriations in Holding Pattern

The VA-HUD Appropriations bill has still not been taken up for consideration by the full the Senate. This week's focus in the Senate was finishing work on the Bush Administration's \$87 billion supplemental funding request for Iraq and Afghanistan. The schedule for the week of October 20 includes consideration of several policy proposals, but not any of the remaining spending measures. The Continuing Resolution passed on October 1 to keep the government running until the FY04 appropriations are complete expires on October 31, so the Senate has only have the week of October 27 to finish its work. Given the tight timetable, the possibility grows of an omnibus spending bill, as opposed to the VA-HUD bill being considered on its own.

The Sense of the Senate resolution that calls for full funding of all existing vouchers that Senators Paul Sarbanes (D-MD) and Susan Collins (R-ME) are expected to offer is gaining support. However, if Senate leadership decides to go with an omnibus bill, there may be little opportunity for Sarbanes-Collins resolution to be considered.

On the House side, Representatives Jerry Nadler (D-NY) and Nydia Velasquez (D-NY) are circulating a letter that will be sent to the VA-HUD Subcommittee Chairs and Ranking Members in both the House and Senate urging full voucher funding as the bill moves through the Senate and conference. Already, 98 Members have signed the letter.

NLIHC is urging its members to contact their Senators and Representatives to request endorsement of the voucher funding support measures in their respective chambers. The full call to action is available at www.nlihc.org.

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HUD

Exception Payment Standards Controversy

Housing and civil rights organizations delivered a letter to HUD Secretary Mel Martinez this week expressing concerns about the September 13 memo from Assistant Secretary for Public and Indian Housing Michael Liu to HUD field offices rescinding all authority for the granting of exception payment standards for vouchers except for people with disabilities. The letter, signed by NLIHC, the ACLU, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under the Law, the National Alliance to End Homelessness, the NAACP, the National Coalition for the Homeless, and the National Housing Law Project, emphasized the successes of the Housing Voucher Program and the value of granting exceptions to expand further policy goals. The letter stated that "the current regulation is carefully constructed to strike a balance between local officials' need for flexibility to respond to unique housing market conditions and HUD's responsibility and authority to ensure that cost increases do not exceed what is needed to achieve program goals."

Speaking at the opening session of the Quadel Housing Choice Voucher Conference this week, HUD Voucher Management Program Director Gerald Benoit said the September 13 memo requires that all exceptions be approved at HUD Head-

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POINT OF VIEW

by Sheila Crowley, President

On his way to meet California Governor - Elect Arnold Schwarzenegger and to attend a couple of fundraisers this week, President Bush stopped off in Dinuba, CA, population 16,844, 75% of whom are Latino. He spoke to a group of people assembled at the Ruiz Foods plant, one of the largest employers in the San Joaquin Valley. The subject of his speech was billed as "housing and the economy."

Here's some of what he talked about besides housing: Mel Martinez's flight from Cuba, faith-based volunteerism in the "army of compassion" distributing food donations to the hungry, tax cuts for married people and people with children, how tax cuts will create jobs, getting rid of the "death tax" to help farmers and ranchers and small business owners, his six-point plan to stimulate the economy (controlling the cost of health care, tort reform, enacting the national energy bill, deregulation, open trade policy and of course, making tax cuts permanent), hunting down al Qaeda, liberating Afghanistan, toppling Saddam Hussein, finding evidence of weapons of mass destruction, the continued threat from terrorism, and his optimism about America overcoming adversity.

Sandwiched halfway into a nine-and-a-half page speech, Mr. Bush devoted a little more than a page to the following housing topics: low interest rates helping first time homebuyers and home remodelers, record high home ownership rates and America being "an ownership society," the homeownership gap between "Anglos" and racial minorities, his goal of 5.5 million new

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NATIONAL LOW INCOME
HOUSING COALITION

Capitol Hill *(cont'd from p. 1)*

Senate Begins GSE Hearings

On Thursday, October 16, the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee held a hearing on the regulation and oversight of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac at which HUD Secretary Mel Martinez and Secretary of Treasury John Snow testified on the proposal to split the oversight of Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae between their agencies. In addition, Fannie Mae Chairman and CEO Franklin Raines and Freddie Mac Presiding Director George Gould testified on their organizations' positions on the proposal, and Norman Rice, President and CEO of the Federal Home Loan Bank of Seattle, testified on how the proposal would affect Federal Home Loan Banks (FHLBs).

As reported in last week's *Memo*, the House proposal to strengthen the regulation of the housing-related government sponsored entities (GSEs), including Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and the FHLBs (H.R. 2575), would move the regulatory and oversight function from HUD's Office of Federal Housing Enterprise Oversight (OFHEO) to the Department of the Treasury. Treasury would be given regulatory authority over capital standards, but HUD would continue to approve the businesses Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac enter into, as well as set GSE housing goals.

Neither HUD nor the Treasury supports the proposal to have the functions of the GSEs split between agencies. "One man cannot serve two masters," Secretary Snow said in his written testimony. Mr. Raines and Mr. Gould, however, expressed their organizations' support for the proposal. They further agreed that under the proposal, Treasury should have the authority to veto any HUD-approved activity that would threaten the soundness of the GSEs.

Both the Administration and the GSEs agreed that the new agency, wherever it is housed, should be funded independently of the appropriations process. Witnesses argued that one of the weaknesses of OFHEO is a lack of funding to offer salaries that would help recruit professionals with the expertise necessary to adequately monitor the GSEs.

Mr. Raines did express concern over consolidating the regulation of FHLBs with that of Fannie and Freddie. He said that the goals and structure of the two entities are vastly different and that consolidation, if it did not recognize those differences, could interfere with Fannie's performance.

There was consensus among the Senators that oversight of the GSEs should be strengthened and that any reform should increase their soundness and strength without interfering with their affordable hous-

ing goals. Senators also noted that regulating the GSEs is a very complex issue that requires more than one hearing. Chairman Richard Shelby (R-AL) agreed and said he would hold additional hearings to hear from other stakeholders affected by changes in the GSEs' regulation.

Senators also applauded the GSEs for their role in promoting homeownership, agreeing that the unprecedented homeownership rates are in part due to the GSEs' role in the housing market.

During the hearing, Senator Paul Sarbanes (D-MD) also told Secretary Martinez that he hoped HUD was planning to look into a problem in Florida in which people who own mobile homes but not the land are being displaced by developers who want to build expensive condominiums. Senator Sarbanes added that many people affected are seniors who should be protected.

The next GSE hearing in the Committee, "Proposals for Improving the Regulation of the Housing GSEs," is scheduled for October 23 at 10 am in 538 Dirksen.

Senate Committee Passes American Dream Downpayment Act

On October 15, the Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee unanimously passed S. 811, the American Dream Downpayment Act. A cornerstone of the Bush Administration's housing policy, the Act would authorize downpayment assistance for low and moderate income households. Under the Act, families would likely receive an average of \$5,000 to be used towards their downpayment expenses. The Senate committee authorized \$200 million each year for the next three fiscal years, while the House bill would provided \$200 million a year for the next two years.

Other differences between the House and Senate versions of the bill come from several amendments that had been incorporated into the Senate bill before the Committee considered it. An amendment offered by Senator Reed (D-RI) would allow 20% of the Act's funds to be used for home repairs—including lead based paint removal or code compliance activities—made within one year of purchasing the home.

In addition, an amendment from Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) to include language from the Legacy Act (S. 381), to provide housing assistance to grandparent-headed households, was included in the bill. The amendment would establish a demonstration program to be used in conjunction with the Section 202 program, which provides housing assistance for seniors. Funds would be used to develop intergenerational dwelling units within existing Section 202 projects.

(See Capitol Hill on p. 5)

Update from the Field

Expanding the Base on the West Coast

Housing coalitions in California and Washington state are using innovative means to expand their states' bases of housing advocates. The Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California (NPH) held a very successful job fair at its annual conference on October 7, while the Washington Low Income Housing Alliance (WLIHA) and the Tenants Union (TU) will hold a series of tenant advocacy workshops over the next year.

NPH first held a job fair as part of its 2002 conference. The job fair was a rather a late addition to that conference program and somewhat informal. But NPH reached out to major Bay Area universities as well as major housing organizations such as the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, and turnout of both job seekers and employers was good. As a result, NPH made the job fair a more integral part of this year's conference.

The conference included a workshop in the final slot of the day geared specifically toward job seekers participating in the job fair. The workshop was structured around several panelists working in low income housing and community development. The panelists were at various stages in their careers and had followed different career paths. More than 60 people attended the workshop.

The workshop fed into the job fair, which took place in conjunction with the post-conference reception. There were 25 tables of employers, plus lists of more than 100 other organizations seeking employees. The job fair attracted 225 people. To assure that the job fair was accessible both to job seekers and employers, NPH charged job seekers \$10 for the workshop and the job fair and charged employers nothing.

NPH Executive Director Dianne Spaulding considered the job fair a success. By allowing those interested in housing issues to find opportunities in the field, the job fair dovetailed with Ms. Spaulding's assessment of the current situation in California generally. "There has never been a better time to be an advocate. We face challenges and opportunities," she said.

Advocacy by tenants will be the focus of workshops to be held by WLIHA and the TU in Washington state. Between November and April, WLIHA and the TU will host three tenant advocacy workshops, each in a different part of the state. The workshops are being supported by the City of Seattle's Human Services Department and advertised with flyers placed in libraries, foodbanks and low income housing developments, among other places.

(See Update from the Field on p. 5)

National Housing Trust Fund

House Minority Leader Joins Bill

In an important victory for the National Housing Trust Fund Campaign, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) cosponsored the H.R. 1102 this week. Ms. Pelosi's cosponsorship of the National Affordable Housing Trust Fund Act brings the total number of cosponsors of the bill to 207. In other positive news, the number of endorsers for the National Housing Trust Fund passed 4,500 this week, as support across the nation continues to swell.



Students continue to be an integral part of the Campaign. In Baltimore, students at Loyola College completed their second Trust Fund call-in day on October 10, and spent their fall break day on October 17 meeting with nine Representatives on Capitol Hill to discuss H.R. 1102 and the Bringing America Home Act, H.R. 2897. The Loyola College Jesuit University Students Together In Concerned Empowerment (JUSTICE) Club has made the National Housing Trust Fund its focus for the fall 2003 semester, and members have been educating their fellow students about the affordable housing crisis.

The National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness also is active in the National Housing Trust Fund Campaign. The Trust Fund will be on the agenda for the organization's October 31 National Conference, at which participants will send Trust Fund postcards to their elected officials.

More information is available at www.nhtf.org.

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Treasury

CRA Investments Jeopardized

The National Association of Affordable Housing Lenders has alerted the housing community that a portion of a proposed rule recently issued by the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC) could have the unintended consequence of discouraging banks with substantial investments in housing tax credits and CDFIs from continuing to make CRA investments.

The rule implementing the proposed Basel Capital Accord, published in the August 4, 2003, *Federal Register* includes the special rule for “Legislated Program Equity Exposures.” Part of this rule preserves the current capital charge on most equity investments made under legislated programs that involve government oversight. According to NAAHL, this approach makes sense because CRA investments in affordable housing and community and economic development have a different risk/return profile than other equity investments.

However, another provision designed to trigger higher capital requirements on other equity exposures could be a problem. This would occur because of a “materiality” tripwire that requires banks that have on average more than 10% of capital in all equity investments to set aside much higher amounts of capital on the non-CRA investments. The provision’s unintended consequences could result in banks being discouraged from making CRA investments in affordable housing and community and economic development, so as not to trigger the higher capital charges on non-CRA investments.

NAAHL is urging housing organizations to comment on the rule requesting that the rule exclude CRA-related investment from the materiality test calculation in light of the very different risk/return profile. NAAHL is sponsoring a conference call on October 24 to explain the rule and its consequences. See News and Events in this *Memo* for details. Comments can be sent to regs.comments@occ.treas.gov, by November 3.

GAO

GAO Reviews Section 4 Programs

In response to an inquiry by Representative Sue Kelly (R-NY), chair of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, and Representative Bob Ney (R-OH), chair of the Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity, the General Accounting Office (GAO) has reviewed HUD’s Section 4 capacity-building program. GAO was asked to assess the expansion and evolution of the program and its funding since its inception, the relationship between Section 4 funding and private sector funds, the oversight of the program by HUD and program grantees, and the program’s impact.

The report noted that, since 1993, the Section 4 program has funded the capacity-building activities of

more than 1,600 local organizations in more than 800 cities. GAO defines capacity-building as “strengthening the capabilities of program recipients or providers—typically housing or community development organizations—to build institutional knowledge within those organizations. Among other things, capacity-building assistance can include funding for training, hiring staff, purchasing software, obtaining expertise from outside sources, and developing accounting systems and strategic plans.”

In its review, GAO noted that the scope of the Section 4 program has expanded significantly since 1993. Initially, HUD joined the National Community Development Initiative (NCDI, now known as Living Cities), which has involved for-profit, public, and nonprofit funders in community development efforts. NCDI has relied on the Enterprise Foundation and the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) to administer Section 4 funds, other funds and private funds to community-development corporations in 23 cities. In 1997, Habitat for Humanity International (HFHI) and Youthbuild USA (YBUSA) became eligible for Section 4 funds to be used in other cities and in rural and tribal areas. HUD also began providing funding to LISC and Enterprise for work outside of NCDI, as well as for NCDI work. The report describes the varied ways in which these four grantees use Section 4 and other funds to build capacity at the local level.

The report was unable to conclude whether there is a direct causal link between Section 4 funding specifically and funding provided by the private sector. However, Enterprise, LISC, HFHI and YBUSA, as well as private foundations and lenders interviewed by GAO, asserted that the leverage provided by federal funding was important to other funders. Since they began participating in the Section 4 program, the grantees have raised \$800 million in private sector resources.

In reviewing the oversight of the Section 4 program, GAO found that HUD uses limited desk reviews of work plans, performance reports and other required information to monitor the four grantees. HUD relies on the grantees to oversee their subrecipients. While GAO generally found the grantees’ oversight of their subrecipients sufficiently comprehensive, it found one ineligible use of funds and recommended that HUD take steps to recover those funds.

HUD has not tracked the impact of the Section 4 program on the capacity of local organizations. However, the Office of Management and Budget is requiring that HUD and the NCDI grantees participate in its Program Assessment Rating Tool review, which will include an evaluation of the program’s results. In addition, as the result of a recommendation in a previous GAO report, HUD is developing a framework for reviewing technical assistance programs generally.

Capitol Hill *(cont'd from p.2)*

Also included were amendments relating to FHA loans, including one offered by Senator Jon Corzine (D-NJ) to increase the FHA multifamily loan limits. The language would allow limits to be increased to 140% of the statutory base limit without HUD approval, and up to 170% on a HUD-approved, project-by-project basis in high cost areas. Senator Corzine noted that the increase could result in the additional construction of 6,000 rental units. The House version of this bill, H.R. 1985, would allow all projects to be increased to up to 170% of statutory base limits.

S. 811 has not yet been scheduled for a floor vote.

Bills at a Glance

Current information on legislation being tracked by NLIHC is available through NLIHC's legislative action center, at <http://capwiz.com/nlihc/issues/bills/>.

HUD *(cont'd from p. 1)*

quarters. Headquarters will look at the requests from a different point of view than the Field Offices, Mr. Benoit said, trying to determine why a request is being made and whether it is related to the Fair Market Rent (FMR) for that area. If the FMR is set too high, HUD wants to be able to address that problem. Mr. Benoit suggested that HUD would like to be able to adjust the FMR more than once a year without going through a lengthy regulatory process each time.

Mr. Liu Speaks on Vouchers

HUD Assistant Secretary for Public and Indian Housing Michael Liu opened his luncheon address at the Quadel Housing Choice Voucher Conference in Washington, DC, on October 16 by refuting reports that the Bush Administration has pulled back on its support for housing. As an example, Mr. Liu cited the recently rejuvenated Housing Authority in New Orleans. He said that through HUD's efforts over the last two years, the housing authority is viable once again and that HUD is very proud of this accomplishment. Mr. Liu explained that under the Bush Administration, HUD is concentrating a great deal of effort on the nuts and bolts of the programs they administer, adding they are making good use of the resources at hand.

Mr. Liu focused much of his remarks on HUD's efforts to expand homeownership using Section 32 and Section 8 voucher program. He cited a new study from Ohio State University that found that low income families fare much better if they own their own homes. He thanked Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac and the Federal Home Loan Banks, as well as private banks, for their help in HUD's homeownership initiative.

In brief comments on the Bush Administration's FY04 budget proposal to turn the Housing Choice Voucher program into a block grant administered by the states (Housing Assistance for Needy Families, or HANF), Mr. Liu acknowledged that the proposal has not gotten much traction in Congress, and said that the Administration does not expect the proposal to go anywhere in this session of Congress. He went on to say that parts of the proposal have generated interest, especially those elements that would streamline the delivery system. Mr. Liu urged the members of the audience to communicate their ideas to HUD.

Mr. Liu closed by saying that the funding for HUD in the FY04 Budget is adequate, and that he is confident in the data HUD is using, which shows that there will be no shortfall in voucher funding in the coming year.

HUD Continues Internat'l Relations

On October 10, President Bush announced that HUD Secretary Mel Martinez would join Secretary of State Colin Powell as a member of the Commission for the Assistance to a Free Cuba. The Commission will be comprised of government experts who will work to plan Cuba's transition to a "free and open" society. An article in the October 11 issue of the *Orlando Sentinel* quoted Mr. Martinez as saying he was the logical choice for the position because of Cuba's housing crisis. "The housing deficit in Cuba is tremendous. HUD is not an international agency, but what we've done with other countries is an exchange of knowledge," Mr. Martinez told the *Sentinel*.

The Secretary's reference to international collaboration is presumably an allusion to HUD's recent announcement of the Memorandum of Cooperation Mr. Martinez signed with his Russian counterpart, agreeing to share knowledge and experience in addressing a variety of housing and urban policy issues.

Update from the Field *(cont'd from p. 3)*

According to Megan Farley, Associate Director at WLIHA, the goal of the workshops is to encourage tenants to use advocacy as a tool for change in their lives and communities. The workshops will include an interactive discussion of the status of housing policies and funding at all levels of government as well as guidance about how to affect policy and funding decisions.

Tenants from Benson East apartments, an at-risk assisted property preserved through a purchase by the tenants themselves, will facilitate, along with members of WLIHA and TU staffs.

In Washington

Brookings Debates Block Grant Proposals

The Bush Administration's proposal to turn the Housing Choice Voucher program into a block grant to the states received plenty of attention at an October 15 Brookings Institution forum on the past, present and future of federal block grants. Also included in the discussion of the Administration's block grants proposals were Medicaid, Head Start, and child protection, each of which primarily serves low income people.

Senator Jim Talent (R-MO) stressed the importance of considering each block grant proposal on practical, not ideological, merits. He said that key questions that must be asked include what will work to better serve the people, how can community-based organizations be better empowered to serve their communities, what is the role that the states should play, and how to get greater accountability. "The model for providing services is community-based," Senator Talent said, saying that an ideal model is that of community health centers, which receive direct grants from the federal government.

Margy Waller, a visiting fellow at Brookings, rebuked many of the Administration's stated arguments in support of block grants. She pointed out that block grants rarely result in administrative savings, and that in some cases, including that of the voucher program, block granting the program would actually move the authority from the local providers up to the states. She also noted that the intent of block grants tends to change and become less flexible over time, as Congress is tempted to add strings or set-asides to the funds. Further, their deconcentrated nature means there is little ownership of block grant programs at the federal level, which can make a block grant more vulnerable to funding cuts. "The very thing that states like about it is the thing that causes its downfall," Ms. Waller said.

Robert Rector of the Heritage Foundation said it was possible to use the block grant process to provide states with more flexibility while also holding them to stronger standards. "When we look at block grants philosophically, both conservatives and liberals want to subordinate them to higher principles," Mr. Rector said. He said that conservatives were primarily concerned with encouraging work and marriage, while liberals were concerned with expanding the reach of services.

Bob Greenstein, Director of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), noted the difference between block grants that combine small categorical grants into one larger program and can lead to more efficiency, such as the Community Development Block Grant Program, and block grants that take an existing federal

program and turn more of the federal responsibility to the states, as the Medicaid or voucher proposals would do. He echoed the concern that the Administration's proposals seem to be motivated by fiscal, not federalist, concerns. Further, Mr. Greenstein pointed out that block granting the Section 8 program would likely undercut the goals of the TANF program, as less voucher funding would mean less in the way of support for people trying to leave the TANF program.

"It is not a zero-sum game," Mr. Rector rebuked. "[Before TANF], a lot of people were getting assistance who didn't need it, and if you put behavioral requirements on it, they will drop out and [the program] will get a surplus." Mr. Rector also asserted that half of people living in subsidized housing performed no work in a given year, which Barbara Sard of CBPP later said was actually no more than 13%.

Ms. Sard noted that the Millennial Housing Commission called the voucher program "flexible, cost-efficient, and successful in its mission." She said that while the program could be improved, it required only changes around the margins, not a radical restructuring. Ms. Sard said that it was difficult to identify any real agenda the Administration could have in wanting to convert the program into a block grant other than to cut funding. She also noted that despite tepid support from states and other stakeholders, the Administration is likely continue to push its voucher block grant proposal.

Wade Horn, Assistant Secretary for the Administration for Children and Families in the Department of Health and Human Services, said that most block grants would be optional, allowing states to decide whether or not to operate their programs under the block grant. In the case of the voucher program, however, the block grant would replace the existing program in every state.

Vote for NLIHC in Working Assets Fund

The Working Assets phone company each year donates a portion of its profits to select nonprofit organizations, and each year Working Assets customers vote on how funds should be distributed. This year, NLIHC is one of 50 groups in the running for a share of the funds. Members of Working Assets can vote for funds to be appropriated to NLIHC by filling out the Working Assets 2003 Donations Ballot and marking support for NLIHC. The distribution of funds is determined solely by how many votes each group receives.

There are three easy ways to vote:

1. Fill out the ballot in your Working Assets phone bill.
2. Vote online at www.workingassets.com/voting.
3. Call the voter hotline at 1800-920-VOTE.

Voting ends December 31. Thanks for participating!

Resources

Public Attitudes Toward Low Income Families and Children

The National Center for Children in Poverty released a study in October that surveys public opinion in regard to various governmental assistance programs. "Public Attitudes Toward Low-Income Families and Children Research Report No. 1: Circumstances Dictate Public Views of Government Assistance" uses a survey vignette format to measure public support for various government assistance programs in regards to a female subject. The study finds generally high support for such programs, although support often varies according to the subject's obstacles to employment, and whether she works or receives welfare.

To test the opinions of the general public toward various governmental assistance programs, the authors created a vignette centered around a female subject described as a mother of two children facing difficulties in providing basic necessities for her family. Other characteristics (such as physical disability, mental illness, living in an area with high unemployment, and trouble with good child care) were varied randomly. Respondents were given the vignettes and asked a series of questions about the subject. The report examined support for various types of government assistance in the context of the specific vignette described.

The researchers focused on three questions: whether support for government assistance was dependent upon whether a woman was working or on welfare, whether public support was higher for those experiencing personal or situational difficulties, and whether the public was more supportive of government assistance for women facing barriers when these woman were on welfare or working. In all, there were ten possible barriers.

The study found that support for many forms of assistance was similar regardless of whether the vignette subject was on welfare or was employed. Support for cash assistance and tax relief was generally low, while job training support was high. Public support for health insurance and educational assistance did not vary depending on the vignette subject's barriers or work versus welfare status and had high levels of support: 76% of respondents supported health insurance for the subject, and 87% of respondents supported educational assistance.

To enhance public support of government assistance programs, the study advocates framing the problems of low income women and families in terms of the barriers they face. The report is available at www.nccp.org/pub_pat03a.html.

Housing in the Elections

Provisional Voting Will Help Every Vote Count

In an important step towards ensuring full democracy during elections, a new federal law mandates that voters whose name is not on the registration list on election day or whose eligibility is in question at the time of the vote must be allowed to cast a "provisional" vote that will be verified before it is counted. On October 9, the League of Women Voters (LWV) released a new publication called "Helping America Vote: A Guide to Implementing the New Federal Provisional Ballot Requirement" that looks at the provisional voting requirement of the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA).

According to LWV, the provisional ballot requirement is "the single most important way to ensure that every voter who goes to the polls on Election Day will be able to cast a vote and, if they are eligible, have that vote counted." The requirement was added to HAVA in light of the fact that between 1.5 million and 3 million voters were turned away from the polls in 2000 due to problems in voter registration systems. "Now, for the first time since the chaos of the 2000 elections, everyone must be able to cast a ballot and, if they are eligible, have that vote counted," the League finds.

The publication reports that about half of the states already have provisional voting policies in effect. Looking at states that had successfully implemented the provisional ballot requirement, the League compiled a set of model practices and recommendations that will aid states in ensuring the measure fulfills its purpose. In Utah, for example, more than 10,000 provisional ballots were issued, of which more than 8,000 ended up being counted. In Colorado, more than 24,000 of 28,000 provisionally cast ballots were counted.

The report is available at www.lwv.org/elibrary/pub/voting_help-vote.pdf.

Fact of the Week

Support for Assistance

Percent of public supporting food stamps, housing assistance and transportation assistance by work/welfare status of female subject with no barriers, 2002.

	Work status		
	not specified	Working	On Welfare
Food Stamps	87.3%	79.6%	81.1%
Housing Assistance	88.6%	77.8%	77.3%
Transpo Assistance	59.0%	53.0%	63.7%

Source: "Public Attitudes Toward Low-Income Families and Children Research Report No. 1: Circumstances Dictate Public Views of Government Assistance" www.nccp.org/pub_pat03a.html.

News & Events

Call on CRA Investment Threats

The National Association of Affordable Housing Lenders (NAAHL) will hold an interactive audio forum on Friday, October 24, at noon ET to discuss practical problems for CRA investing posed by international banking regulations. Proposed changes to the Basel Capital Accord contain a 'time bomb' that could explode on CRA investments, advocates say. Gary Washington of LaSalle Bank Corporation, Buzz Roberts of LISC and Judy Kennedy of NAAHL will provide their perspective on the problem and what advocates can do about it. The registration fee is \$45 for NAAHL members and \$65 for non-members. Registration information should be faxed to 202-293-9852. Registered participants will receive background material and call-in information.

Children's Sabbath Celebration/Vigil

On Sunday, October 26, at 3 pm ET at the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in Washington, DC, congregations from diverse faith traditions will worship, hear children's singing and dancing, and learn how to work together to improve the lives of our children, especially those most at risk. Participants will then walk to the White House to pray for renewal of the national concern for children and to urge the President and Congress to establish and fund programs sufficient "to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start, and a Moral Start in life." Speakers will include Marian Wright Edelman, President of the Children's Defense Fund and area faith leaders. The event is sponsored by the Interfaith Child Advocacy Network of Metro Washington. For more information, contact Joe Collier at 703-927-2919, or joecollier@cox.net.

Home Ownership Summit

The Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) will hold a Homeownership Summit focusing on revitalization through production at the Hotel Washington in Washington, DC, November 3-4. The Summit will bring together affordable housing and community development experts to discuss current issues, strategies and policies. Homeownership production will be addressed through the context of demand: the marketing of real estate and neighborhoods; supply: how to reach scale in housing development; and sustainability: examining both post-purchase counseling and neighborhood stability. Speakers include Assistant HUD Secretary Roy A. Bernardi and Colvin Grannum, Executive Director of Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation.

Details are at www.liscnet.org/whatwedo/programs/home_ownership/summit_2003/. Registration is \$50 per person, and scholarships are available. Questions should be sent to summit@liscnet.org.

Point of View *(cont'd from p. 1)*

minority homeowners in 10 years, his \$200 million down payment assistance idea that is "stuck" in the Senate, the complexity of the home-buying process and his doubling of housing counseling funds, and reform of the real estate closing process. Curiously, he did not mention his home ownership tax credit proposal. Wasn't that the centerpiece of his housing policy?

In Tulare County where Dinuba is, 38% of the households are renters and 49% of them cannot afford modest housing. The housing wage in Tulare County is \$11.38 an hour or \$23,608 a year. The area median income is \$39,100; the median income for renters is \$23,236 a year. The 2000 Census tells us 21% of the families and 37% of the children in Dinuba are below the poverty level. In fact, Dinuba is one of the poorest areas in the country and is grouped with places like Appalachia, the Colonias, and the Mississippi Delta. Unemployment is double digit. Although housing costs are not astronomical like they are in other parts of California, wages are so low and unemployment is so high that what housing is there is unaffordable. According to Peter Carey of Self-Help Enterprises, which operates in this part of California, the old housing is substandard and the new housing is not affordable. Housing for farmworkers is especially in short supply.

The lack of affordable housing, the substandard housing conditions, the high housing burdens of low income renters, or the extraordinary rates of child poverty and unemployment in the community the President chose as the backdrop for a speech on housing and the economy did not make it into the speech. Of course, they have not made it onto his policy agenda either. But then this was not a policy speech. It was a transparently political outing to court the "Hispanic vote." I suspect that many of the people who live in this community were able to see right through it.



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About NLIHC: Established in 1974, the National Low Income Housing Coalition is dedicated solely to ending America's affordable housing crisis. NLIHC educates, organizes, and advocates to ensure decent, affordable housing within healthy neighborhoods for everyone. NLIHC provides up-to-date information, formulates policy, and educates the public on housing needs and the strategies for solutions.