

MEMO OF MEMBERS

The Weekly Newsletter of the National Low Income Housing Coalition

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SPECIAL VOUCHER REPORT

New Administration Policy Threatens Residents

What the New Policy Is

HUD issued a notice on April 22 that explains its implementation of FY04 funding for the Housing Choice Voucher Program. The 2,500 public housing agencies that manage the Housing Voucher program were told that they would no longer be paid based on the actual costs of the vouchers they administer, but rather payment would be based on the cost of vouchers under lease as of August 1, 2003, with an adjustment for inflation.

The notice is retroactive to January 1, 2004. Agencies that received payments in January, February, and March of 2004 based on the old FY03 funding system will have to pay back these "overpayments," meaning they will not receive the full funding to which they are entitled FY04 funding system as stated in the April 22 memo.

Those agencies with higher costs can use their reserves to make up the loss. However, approximately one third of PHAs have no program reserves. Further, HUD has refused to pay PHAs overdue reserves from the last fiscal year. The notice gives PHAs the option to make the case before July 15 that the inflation adjustment factor applied to them needs to be higher, but the process for making such a request will be revealed at a later time. In the meantime, some agencies with fiscal years that end June 30 will have run out of funds.

The adjustment for inflation, called the annual adjustment factor, does not account for all possible increases in voucher costs. Most notably, it does not include reductions in tenants' income, due to layoffs, reduced hours, or health factors that prevent tenants from work.

The consequences of running short or out of funds are dire. PHAs will have to terminate contracts with landlords, lower rent payments to landlords, raise tenant rents, stop reissuing vouchers that become available, withdraw vouchers from families who are looking for housing, and/or withdraw commitments for project-based vouchers in developments underway.

HUD officials assert that they are carrying out what Congress directed them to do in the FY04 Appropriations bill. Many Members of Congress and advocates disagree with HUD's interpretation. However, there is no disagreement that Congress intended for the voucher program to be fully funded. In the Appropriations conference committee, sufficient funds were provided. Under HUD's interpretation of the FY04 Appropriations language, at least \$200 million of the FY04 appropriation for voucher would go unspent.

For a more detailed analysis of the April 22 memo, see Center on Budget and Policy Priorities paper at www.cbpp.org.

HUD actions on FY04 voucher funding have been met with considerable reactions, reviewed in the reports beginning on page 2.

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POINT OF VIEW

by Sheila Crowley, President

Just in case you were harboring any illusions about President Bush's commitment to "ending chronic homelessness," you can let go of them. The disintegration of financing for permanent supportive housing developments in the wake of HUD's implementation of FY04 voucher funding is ample evidence of how empty the promise is.

Already we have learned of permanent supportive housing deals in Minnesota and Ohio that were relying on agreements with local PHAs for projected-based vouchers to complete the financing that have "tanked," because PHAs have canceled contracts to cope with their funding shortfalls. As individual PHAs come to grips with how HUD's action will affect their communities, more deals will be called off. As the meaning of HUD's action sinks in, landlords, developers, and lenders will flee the voucher program in droves. Homeless and other low income people who need housing will be out of luck, and their ranks will swell with those who lose their housing assistance.

I suppose it is possible that HUD officials did not mean for this to happen when they concocted this plan for funding vouchers this year. When asked why HUD was cutting vouchers in contradiction of the department's goal to end chronic homelessness, a HUD employee in the voucher program replied that vouchers and homeless programs were in different offices at HUD and did not have anything with one another. (Do we need another Congressional commission to figure out why different offices in the same department do

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**NATIONAL LOW INCOME
HOUSING COALITION**

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Advocates Meet with HUD Officials

A delegation of 40 people attending the NLIHC Housing Policy Conference met with Bill Russell, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public Housing and Voucher Programs and Paula Blunt, General Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public and Indian Housing at HUD, on Tuesday, April 27, to discuss the FY04 voucher crisis. Mr. Russell held to HUD's earlier assertions that voucher costs are rising too rapidly and housing authorities are to blame for the problems.

The meeting followed a letter sent to Mr. Russell on Monday, April 26 by NLIHC President Sheila Crowley in which she called upon HUD to withdraw the April 22 notice and restore the funding policy HUD used for FY03, which would mean funding vouchers at their actual cost based on the latest available data.

Advocates reported to Mr. Russell and Ms. Blunt the impact that the notice would have in their states. New Hampshire and Massachusetts advocates warned that the notice will cause the suspension of payments on existing vouchers or across-the-board cuts in payments to landlords. Ohio and Minnesota advocates described how low income housing tax credit deals are already falling through because public housing agencies (PHAs) no longer have funds for the project-based vouchers that were to provide operating support.

In response, Mr. Russell said that HUD was simply following Congressional intent, as expressed in the FY04 appropriations legislation. He noted that PHAs in areas where rental costs have increased beyond the annual adjustment factor (AAF) can appeal to HUD for additional funds, but he said that PHAs need to live within their budgets. He indicated disbelief about the validity of PHAs' complaints about voucher costs, noting that HUD had heard from mayors that in some parts of the country vouchers were leading the rental market. Further, he said that it was unrealistic for advocates to believe that Congress would continue to provide substantial increases in the voucher program, regardless of market influences. As a domestic discretionary program, it is a target for deficit reduction efforts.

Advocates challenged the assertion that that HUD was simply following Congress' direction. Will Fischer of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities said that, contrary to Mr. Russell's statement of the law, HUD has the authority to continue to support all vouchers in use and has sufficient funds to do so. However, Mr. Fischer also said that even if HUD were to maintain its interpretation of the FY04 appropriations legislation, it could implement that interpretation in a less harmful

manner. He raised the following points:

- HUD's notice is very vague on the timing and process of appeals, and so HUD should provide detailed guidance immediately and act on any appeal requests quickly.
- In evaluating appeals, HUD should also take into consideration other reasons for increased voucher costs—such as decreased tenant incomes—in addition to rents that have escalated beyond the annual adjustment factor.
- HUD should be lenient in the time given to PHAs to make up voucher “overpayments” that HUD has made to PHAs since January, given HUD's own tardiness in issuing the notice and the severe pressure the notice imposes on PHAs with a fiscal year ending on June 30.
- HUD should replenish PHAs' one-month program reserves. Because HUD has refused to pay many housing authorities their overdue reserves, many do not have sufficient funds to cover the emerging shortfalls.

Advocates left the meeting with no resolutions and a strong sense of frustration that HUD officials were unconcerned about the consequences of their actions.

HUD Defends Cuts in Press Call

On Monday, April 26, Michael Liu, Assistant HUD Secretary for Public and Indian Housing, held a hastily called telephone press conference to defend HUD's April 22 memo on funding changes to the housing voucher program. Mr. Liu primarily blamed Congress and local housing authorities for the funding shortfalls housing authorities are now facing.

Speaking from a prepared statement, Mr. Liu told reporters that the intent of the new funding method was to control the escalating costs of the voucher program. He said that Congress had placed this restriction on HUD by issuing it guidance to make payments to housing authorities based on the cost of vouchers under lease on August 1, 2003, adjusted for inflation.

Mr. Liu was asked about advocates' claims that Congress did not mandate these changes and that HUD could have chosen other ways to interpret Congressional language. He responded by claiming that if HUD were to implement the interpretation preferred by others, “the program would be in an automatic deficit.” Mr. Liu also added that each housing authority has until July to ask for more money to cover unique local inflation factors. He then went on to tell reporters that HUD expected that “less than half” of the 2,500 housing authorities would experience a change under the new policy.

Mr. Liu cited two reasons for the increasing costs and
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NLIHC CONFERENCE

REPORT: Housing in 2004

Plenary Session Focuses on Public Opinion of Affordable Housing

More than 450 advocates, including residents, state coalition partners, and others, attended NLIHC's annual housing policy conference, held in Washington, DC, April 26 and 27. While current issues including threats to the voucher program, the National Housing Trust Fund, and changes to public housing were discussed, Monday morning's opening plenaries focused on public opinions on affordable housing and increasing voting among people experiencing housing problems.

Keynote speaker Celinda Lake, president of the national public opinion and strategy research firm Lake Snell Perry and Associates, addressed strategies for inserting housing into the national political agenda. She focused on techniques that advocates should use to frame the affordable housing crisis. According to Ms. Lake, housing advocates need to create a "narrative" that articulates the depth and breadth of the need for affordable housing as well as the need for government intervention, just as health care advocates have done.

Ms. Lake noted that local news stories "attached a face" to the need for affordable health care and could do the same for housing. Through these stories, statistics come to mean something in popular opinion. Unfortunately, housing problems rarely appear on the nightly news.

She also noted that the issue of housing rarely appears in popular entertainment, as sitcom characters do not struggle to make the rent or find an affordable home. Based on the outcomes of focus groups that her firm runs, it appears that having an issue raised in a popular TV series is one of the best ways of getting a story into the public consciousness.

Ms. Lake cautioned, however, that stories go only so far. When problems are overly personalized, so are the solutions. In reacting to personal problems of families described in stories, people in focus groups often looked for solutions specific to that family or focused on what it was that made that particular family worthy or unworthy of attention.

Thus, the other problems related to housing as an election year issue are that there are no readily identified villains and no generally agreed upon set of policy solutions. The housing issue lacks both the intensity

of focus and the wide appeal that comes with these two things.

More generally, Ms. Lake noted that 85% of Americans identify themselves as belonging to the "middle class." Thus, referring to the "the poor" and those in poverty does not resonate well, even among those in poverty. Ms. Lake also focused on the need to mobilize single women voters, who are more likely to face housing problems and sympathize with low income issues, but who are vastly underrepresented at the polls.

Panel discussant Stacy Davis Stewart of the Fannie Mae Foundation encouraged advocates to define the affordable housing crisis as affecting middle class as well as low income individuals and to fight negative perceptions of affordable housing. She announced the Fannie Mae Foundation's new partnership to do a public relations campaign around affordable housing. Gene Ulm, of Public Opinion Strategies and the pollster for the National Association of Realtors, also encouraged the portrayal of the affordable housing crisis as an issue that is as "extensive a problem as any other." He noted that the Realtors' poll of the most populous metropolitan areas showed that affordable housing was the second greatest area of concern among urban adults.

Danilo Pelletiere, research director for the National Low Income Housing Coalition, presented data from NLIHC's most recent poll (April, 2004). According to the poll, more than a quarter (26%) of likely voters had difficulty paying their own rent, mortgage, or utilities in the past 12 months, and 70% said their housing costs are a burden that prevents them from spending on other things like a car, retirement, or food. When asked whether they were concerned about the affordability of housing where they live, 81% of likely voters said they are concerned that low income people are not able to afford to rent a home in their communities. Mr. Pelletiere made the point that even though nearly 30% of the population lives in a rented home, only 18% of the survey respondents were renters. This reflects statistics showing that renters are less likely to vote and identify themselves as likely voters. When more renters vote and consider themselves likely voters, the poll numbers will move more firmly in support of low income people and their housing.

The poll can be found at www.nlihc.org/research.

Panelists Offer Ideas on Voting Projects

From the Congressional speakers at Tuesday's lobby day to Monday's workshops, the central theme of NLIHC's Annual Policy conference was giving people a voice through the ballot box and changing the direc-

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Vouchers *(cont'd from p. 2)*

the “mandate from Congress.” First, he claimed the average housing authority’s payment standard is 104% of fair market rent. Second, he claimed that housing authorities have ignored the ‘rent reasonableness’ mandate, which requires rents to be in line with comparable market-rate rents. “This program was intended to follow the market, not lead the market,” Mr. Liu said. “In many places, Section 8 is considered the market leader.” He did not give examples of where this is the case.

When asked what options are available to a resident who is losing his voucher or whose rent is increasing, Mr. Liu indicated that residents’ only option is to contact their local housing authority to see what actions the housing authority is taking to help them.

Mr. Liu declined to comment on any specific local problems other than those of the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, which narrowly avoided having to issue 650 eviction notices on April 27, and the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles, which found itself in severe financial trouble last month.

In each case, Mr. Liu said the housing authority was in financial trouble because it was irresponsible. “Similar to Los Angeles, they [in Massachusetts] need to act responsibly,” he said, including adjusting their payment standards, implementing better rent reasonableness, and improving the screening of tenants. When asked whether he is concerned about people losing their homes, Mr. Liu said, “A law is a law.”

HUD Employee Makes Administration’s Case on Conference Panel

Gerry Benoit, Director of Housing Voucher Management and Operations Division at HUD, addressed the FY04 housing voucher funding problems during a session at the NLIHC conference. Mr. Benoit made the same arguments in favor of the cuts made by other HUD officials in recent days. He asserted that changes are needed to control the cost of the program, which now makes up 50% of HUD’s budget, and that Congress forced HUD to make these changes.

The other panelists, Barbara Sard of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and Telissa Dowling of the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs Resident Advisory Board, herself a voucher holder, disagreed. Ms. Sard pointed out that HUD had specifically provided enough funds to cover every voucher currently in use, and charged that HUD was attempting to take steps to move towards a block grant program that the Administration could not get Congress to approve.

During the question-and-answer period, an advocate from Ohio who works in transitional housing pointed out that the Administration’s attack on Section 8 doesn’t fit with its proclaimed efforts to end long-term homelessness. In response, Mr. Benoit reaffirmed his statement about rising program costs. “The spigot is shut off,” he said.

Mr. Benoit also defended the Administration’s proposal to block grant the program in FY05, saying again that there is a need to control costs, and that the proposal would help more families.

Advocates Rally Outside HUD

Determined to make HUD employees aware of the draconian way that political appointees at the agency are implementing the FY04 voucher appropriations, attendees of NLIHC’s annual policy conference held a rally outside HUD headquarters in Washington on Monday, April 26.

About 150 ralliers, many of whom are voucher holders, stood in the rain for almost an hour chanting slogans including, “Save our Section 8” and “Don’t take my voucher away.”

Meanwhile, other participants distributed fliers to HUD employees, which told employees that a “new HUD policy will force immediate cuts in housing voucher assistance, throwing thousands of families out of their homes.” The fliers described the new policy and the implications that will be felt across the nation if HUD does not rescind the April 22 notice to PHAs and return to the January 2003 method of payment.

“I think the rally helped us get the attention of the leaders at HUD,” said Lynne Ide of the Connecticut Housing Coalition, who participated in the rally. “It also exposed HUD employees to the human impact of their bosses’ misguided interpretation of FY04 Appropriations. Best of all, it energized housing advocates to take this issue back to their states for further protest and action.”

Members of Congress Weigh In

Members of Congress have begun to hear from constituents on the FY04 voucher funding cuts, and are weighing in on the need for solutions. On April 23, Representatives Patrick Tiberi and Deborah Pryce sent a letter to fellow Ohio Republican Michael Oxley, Chair of the House Financial Services Committee, expressing their concern and urging the committee to review HUD’s interpretation of the FY04 appropriations bill. Mr. Tiberi is on the Financial Services Committee and Ms. Pryce is in the Republican leadership.

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Vouchers *(cont'd from p. 5)*

Leading the fight for the Democrats is the Representative Barney Frank (D-MA), Ranking Member of the Financial Services Committee. Addressing advocates from the NLIHC Housing Policy Conference, he dismissed HUD's claim that it is just following Congress's orders. He said that the particular language in the FY04 Appropriations bill that HUD was relying on was inserted in the bill at the last minute at the behest of HUD officials. Mr. Frank is expected to take a series of actions in the coming week.

Representative Jim Leach (R-IA), also a member of the Financial Services Committee, has written to HUD as well, as did Representative Jeb Bradley (R-NH). Representative Nydia Velazquez (D-NY) is initiating a sign-on letter that all Members of Congress will be encouraged to join. These efforts join earlier letters to HUD from Senators Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), Paul Sarbanes (D-MD), and Susan Collins (R-ME).

Representative Bob Ney (R-OH), Chair of the Housing and Community Opportunity Subcommittee of the House Financial Services Committee, also addressed NLIHC conference attendees on the 2004 Section 8 controversy. While Mr. Ney said that the overall question of how to institute cost-cutting measures remained, he was concerned over way in which the policy was implemented, and he assured the audience that the full committee will hold a hearing to discuss the problem. In order to find a longer-term solution, Mr. Ney encouraged holding a roundtable dialogue in which HUD officials, Members of Congress, advocates, housing authority representatives, and voucher holders could discuss their concerns about the voucher program frankly.

Mr. Ney also briefly discussed the Administration's plans for block granting the program in FY04 and FY05, showing little enthusiasm for either proposal. "We can't take housing lightly," he said.

NLIHC Alerts Members

NLIHC issued a call to action to its members on Friday, April 30. The reaction was swift and intense with record use of the NLIHC Capwiz service. (For CTA, go to www.nlihc.org.) NLIHC and its partners are gathering information about repercussions in the wake of the April 22 notice.

Tell Your Friends...

NLIHC membership is the best way to stay informed about affordable housing issues, keep in touch with advocates around the country, and support NLIHC's work. Information is available at www.nlihc.org.

Capitol Hill

Senate Banking Committee Votes on Key HUD Positions

The full Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee voted unanimously on April 29 on the nominations of Roy Bernardi to be HUD Deputy Secretary, Dennis Shea to be Assistant Secretary of Policy Development and Research (PD&R), and Cathy MacFarlane to be Assistant Secretary of Public Affairs. NLIHC misreported in last week's *Memo* that the Committee voted on the nominations last week.

Hill staff reports that the full Senate should vote on the nominations within the next week, as long as no Senator attempts to hold the nomination of Mr. Bernardi because of the FY04 voucher funding problem. As reported, several members of Congress have sent letters to HUD requesting reports on the FY04 Section 8 voucher problem. If HUD does not respond in a timely manner, there is a possibility that the full Senate may not consider Mr. Bernardi's nomination until Members' requests are answered.

Budget Process Moving Slowly

The goal of having a budget resolution completed this week failed when Republican House leadership refused to agree to a compromise that would have applied pay-as-you-go rules to spending and tax cuts for three years, but would have exempted tax cuts such as the child care tax cut and "marriage penalty" tax cut that are scheduled to be extended this year. The House leadership fears that a pay-as-you-go provision will limit Congress's ability to enact additional tax cuts.

Budget conferees have been debating the pay-as-you-go provision, which would require both tax cuts and increases in entitlement spending to be paid for by other spending cuts or an increase in taxes, for several weeks. It has been reported that moderate Republicans and Democrats agreed to a compromise that would have allowed the pay-as-you-go provision to be applied to spending and tax cuts for three years. However, the House leadership so far has refused to accept any pay as you go provision that would last longer than a year.

House Republicans remain hopeful that the conferees can come to an agreement by the end of next week. If the conferees do not come to an agreement, there has been some discussion on a procedure called "deeming," in which both the House and Senate would pass separate budget resolutions that set the spending limits and budget enforcement procedures for the FY05 appropriations process. Republican leadership and

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Conference *(cont'd from p. 3)*

tion of funding for affordable housing in the country. But perhaps the time when conference attendees heard the most resounding message about their responsibility to become engaged in the election process was during Monday's second plenary, titled "Engaging Low Income Communities in Voter Registration, Education and Mobilization."

The six panelists addressed the need to engage low income communities to vote, the benefit such activities could bring to the advocacy efforts of the organization, and the legal and logistical details associated with a voter registration, education and mobilization (VREM) project.

Maureen Daylor and tenant leader Kim Ward of the Brattleboro (VT) Housing Authority discussed ways to engaging public housing tenants in VREM activities. They described one of their more successful strategies, which has been to fulfill residents' often-burdensome community service requirements through voter registration and related activities (See *Memo*, December 19, 2003). Through a role-play, the audience was able to see how the staff and volunteers at the housing authority overcame some of the obstacles they encountered during while registering, and educating voters. "Basically we try anything we think of to get more people to register to vote," Ms. Ward said.

Lakefront Supportive Housing in Chicago is well-known for its residents' high rate of participation in the voting process; more than 75% of Lakefront residents vote. At the plenary session, staff member Lisa Kuklinski and tenant leader Raymond Parker discussed the methods Lakefront Supportive Housing employs to get their tenant leader guilds and residents excited about voter registration, education and mobilization (See *Memo*, April 16), and the reasons behind their projects.

"We began encouraging our tenant leaders to get their buildings involved in voter registration, education and turnout because we knew that the more civic participation each building saw, the more those tenants would have the ear of city, state and federal decision makers," Ms. Kuklinski said. "We continue to do voter registration, education and turnout because we have seen the power it gives us with the policy makers, and the self confidence it creates among the tenants when they see that politicians are just people too," Mr. Parker added.

The legal questions that often arise among non-profit, 501(c)(3) organizations that become engaged in VREM activities were addressed by Attorney John Pomeranz

of the law firm Harmon, Curran, Spielberg and Eisenberg, LLP. Mr. Pomeranz made it clear that 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organizations can and should participate in non-partisan voter registration activities, and listed several guidelines that 501(c)(3)s should abide by in order to stay within the law. These guidelines are available at www.nlihc.org/vrem/education/permissable.html.

NeKiesha Sylver of Project Vote told the audience there has never been a more critical time for low income and minorities populations to get out their vote. "We are dealing with literally issues of life and death in this election," Ms. Sylver said. "This is one of the most critical times in our nation's history to make sure the underserved are getting out their vote, because this is the first time in a long time that an election is so clearly going to determine the path our country will choose."

Ms. Sylver told the audience she is determined that low income people will be the deciding factor, and she challenged all of the attendees to "step into our time."

"This is our time," she said. "Those pollsters aren't talking to us. They don't know what we want. We know what we want, and we will make them talk to us."

Piven: Advocates for Low Income Voters Must Remain Vigilant

The wars the United States is fighting abroad have become the public motivation for a war on domestic programs at home, according to author and activist Frances Fox Piven, the luncheon speaker at this year's NLIHC policy conference. Indeed, Dr. Piven suggested, this may have been part of the initial intention of engaging in such an aggressive foreign policy.

Today, policy leaders regularly refer to the war and the wartime economy in justifying unprecedented cuts in supportive social policies dating back to the New Deal. Dr. Piven asserted that these leaders rely on apathy and indifference to politics and voting to pursue their regressive agenda, and that is why it is important to vote.

While getting poor people registered to vote was once a significant barrier to voter participation, it need not be today, thanks in large part to Dr. Piven herself, as she was instrumental in passing the National Voter Registration Act of 1993. While this bill is popularly known as the "motor voter bill," Dr. Piven pointed out that it applies to all public buildings and that public agencies have an obligation to make registration materials freely available. However, implementation of this obligation is spotty and requires advocates to monitor

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Conference *(cont'd from p. 6)*

and complain when they do not see voter materials in public buildings.

But citing the use of faulty lists to exclude felons from voting in Florida during the 2000 presidential election, Dr. Piven reminded the audience that there will always be new tricks to restrict voter participation, and cautioned advocates for low income voter participation to take on these obstacles as they emerge.

Minority Whip Sends Advocates to the Hill

Representative Steny Hoyer (D-MD), who serves as the Minority Whip in the House, addressed conference attendees on Tuesday morning before they headed off to their lobby visits. He spoke on the importance of making sure that Members of Congress understand that the lack of affordable housing is a serious problem that must be addressed. Mr. Hoyer paraphrased a line from a country song he said was particularly important to keep in mind when talking to Members of Congress: “I know you can hear me, but I don’t know whether you’re listening.” “Most Members of Congress want to do the right thing, but they are tugged and pulled on a regular basis,” he said. Advocates must be vigilant about communicating with their Members of Congress and making sure they understand the issue and its importance.

Housing Trust Fund Leaders Honored

NLIHC’s 22nd annual Housing Leadership Awards Reception was held Tuesday night, and attendees came to honor two leaders in the fight to establish housing trust funds at both the national and community levels. The Melville Charitable Trust received the Coalition’s National Housing Leadership Award, and Mary Brooks of the Housing Trust Fund Project of the Center for Community Change received the Community Housing Leadership Award.

Steve Melville, whose parents Frank and Alan started the Trust in 1990, accepted the award for the Melville Family with Robert Hohler, executive officer of the Trust.

Representative Rosa DeLauro (D), from the Melville’s home state of Connecticut, honored the Melville family. “What Frank and Alan Melville are doing is as simple as it is powerful—they are changing the public debate, one that simply did not exist before they took action,” Ms. DeLauro said. “They have seen how our conservative counterparts invested in the grassroots—in think tanks and foundations—and have been unafraid to finance progressive advocacy efforts on our side of the political spectrum. They are an inspiration, and I shudder to think where we would be without their courage.”

Ms. DeLauro also thanked the crowd for efforts to pass National Housing Trust Fund legislation. “We are so close – let’s make this happen for the families and children of this country!” she said.

Ann O’Hara of the Technical Assistance Collaborative in Boston, Massachusetts, and Nan Roman, Executive Director of the National Alliance to End Homelessness, also praised the foundation for “walking the walk” along with the organizations they fund. In presenting the award to the Melville Charitable Trust, NLIHC President Sheila Crowley thanked the Melvilles for their early and substantial support for the National Housing Trust Fund Campaign that made possible the organizing that has resulted in over 5000 endorsements of the campaign to date.

In receiving the community leadership award for her role in helping to develop more than 300 state and local housing trust funds, Ms. Brooks was honored and introduced by Andy Mott of the Community Learning Project in Washington, DC, and Jan Breidenbach of the Southern California Association of Non-Profit Housing. Ms. Breidenbach detailed the essential role that Ms. Brooks played in the success of the Housing LA campaign that created the \$100 million housing trust fund for the City of Los Angeles. Representative Bernie Sanders (I-VT), focused on the power of Housing Trust Funds and the growing strength of the National Housing Trust Fund. Her steadfast assistance to local organizers of housing trust funds and her contribution to the successful \$50 million Ohio Housing Trust Fund was described by NLIHC Board Chair Bill Faith in presenting the award to Ms. Brooks.

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The White House are leery of not passing a budget resolution, because without a resolution Democrats would be able to have floor debates on expiring tax cuts and offer amendments, such as increasing the federal minimum wage, when there is an attempt to extend tax cuts.

The *Congressional Quarterly* reports that on May 15, House Appropriators will be able to start sending appropriations bills to the floor without a budget resolution. Appropriations Committee Chair Bill Young (R-FL) has already begun work on allocating funds to appropriation subcommittees.

Advocates continue to contact Members of Congress to urge them not to support any budget resolution that does not include pay-as-you-go provisions.

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/>.

Update from the Field State Coalitions Meet

As part of its annual conference, NLIHC held an all-day meeting of its state coalition partners on April 25. Even with a break to allow partners to join the women's rally on the Mall, the meeting provided an opportunity for state coalitions to gain information about federal policy issues and to share news about state-level housing advocacy in different parts of the country.

There were some common themes across states. As might be expected, governors are having effects on housing policy and funding, both positive and negative. In Minnesota, Governor Tim Pawlenty (R) has taken up the Bush Administration's challenge of ending long-term homelessness, although advocates are still dissecting his plan. In South Carolina, Governor Mark Sanford (R) has put in writing that he will not raid the state's housing trust fund again. To the appreciation of advocates, Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell (D) is showing leadership on the affordable housing issue and has created an office of housing and community revitalization.

In Illinois, as reported in last week's *Memo*, Governor Rod Blagojevich (D) has proposed a second raid on that state's housing trust fund, to the disappointment of advocates who had seen promise in his establishment of a housing task force. Governor Jeb Bush (R-FL) attempted to redirect the dedicated funding source for the state's housing trust fund. His effort was beaten back, but the trust fund may still be cut. In the midst of fighting his impeachment, Connecticut Governor John Rowland (R) proposed \$10 million in bonding authority, in contrast to the \$37 million requested by advocates; the legislature seems poised to approve \$15 million. Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger (R-CA) succeeded in securing voters' approval to reduce the state's budget deficit with \$15 billion in bonding. As part of the effort to make up the remaining \$9 billion deficit, the Governor is reducing funds for planning by councils of governments and has proposed increasing payments by farmworkers for their temporary housing.

Efforts on homelessness were prevalent in many states. In Washington state, a Homeless Families Services Fund was established during this year's legislative session to use state and private funds for housing linked with services for homeless families. New Hampshire has established an interagency council on the homeless, and a bill in the legislature would provide rental subsidies to help homeless people secure housing. This year, the Indiana Coalition on Housing and Homeless Issues raised \$300,000 for local agencies with its Homeward Bound walk. Homeless youth, with the support of the Coalition on Housing and Homelessness in Ohio (COHHIO), were successful in fighting a

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not have a common understanding of HUD's mission?) On the other hand, if one wanted to get rid of a program without Congressional approval, what better way could be devised than to undermine support for it those who make business decisions based on it.

In either case, HUD's action is a political misstep. In a poll NLIHC conducted on April 18-21, although only 14% of likely voters had heard about the President's proposed funding cuts for the voucher program for next year, 66% opposed such cuts, 21% were in support, and 12% did not know what they thought. As the news spreads about the current year funding debacle with its imminent consequences, more voters will know about it and a lot more than two-thirds of the voting public will object. (See poll results at www.nlihc.org.)

policy in many shelters in the state that denied access to boys 13 years of age and older.

There were successes on anti-predatory lending legislation in South Carolina and Indiana, but Ohio has ended up with poor anti-predatory lending legislation. Advocates in Ohio, however, had a major victory when they secured a dedicated source for the state's housing trust fund. Vermont's housing trust fund was increased by \$1.5 million and Washington's housing trust fund was protected at \$80 million for the biennium despite a tough budget year. Indiana's trust fund remains unfunded, while California is making plans to establish a dedicated source for housing funding in the future. Advocates in Oregon, California and Pennsylvania, among others, have been working on smart growth issues and in collaboration with smart growth advocates, though in some states, smart growth and housing advocates have serious differences of opinion.

The preservation of existing affordable housing remains a focus in many states. Connecticut advocates are concerned about plans to "revitalize" state-financed public housing along the lines of the federal HOPE VI program. Advocates in New York are also worried about state-subsidized Mitchell-Lama properties that are nearing the end of their affordability terms, as well as HUD's policy of ending affordability restrictions on federally subsidized properties through foreclosure due to poor physical condition. In Ohio, advocates were able to push the state's housing finance agency to put emphasis on preservation, as well as supportive housing, in its qualified allocation plan for tax credits. Advocates in Vermont secured legislation to increase the length of notice of the closure of mobile home parks to 18 months. New Jersey groups were successful in securing legislation on receiverships and abandoned property to help overcome blight and restore affordable housing opportunities.

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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.