MEMO TO MEMBERS

The Weekly Newsletter of the National Low Income Housing Coalition

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SPECIAL REPORT

FY04 VOUCHER FUNDING CRISIS – WEEK 9

Elected Officials, Advocates Continue to Push For Funding

Perhaps the widest-reaching expression of concern to date over HUD's recent changes in funding for the Section 8 housing voucher program came in a letter signed by more than 100 mayors that was sent to Capitol Hill on June 8. Mayors from Vermont to California signed onto a letter initiated by the U.S. Conference of Mayors and sent to Senator Kit Bond (R-MO) and Representative Jim Walsh (R-NY), each chairs of the HUD appropriations subcommittee in their chambers.

The letter urges Congress to direct HUD to fully fund the FY04 Housing Choice Voucher program to avoid tenant hardship, dislocation, and eviction. The mayors assert that HUD's April 22 notice, which restricts voucher funding for local housing authorities to the amount they received in August of 2003 plus a modest adjustment rate, enacts cuts on the backs of seniors, persons with disabilities, and families with children who depend on the program.

Just a day later, on June 9, Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) sent a strongly worded letter to HUD Secretary Alphonso Jackson stating that HUD has provoked a firestorm in the last several weeks, with both cuts to the program stemming from

(See **Vouchers** *on p. 2)*

HUD

Bernardi Receives Recess Appointment

Roy Bernardi was granted a recess appointment as Deputy Assistant Secretary of HUD over the recent Memorial Day Congressional break. A recess appointment allows the Administration to circumvent the regular Senate confirmation process.

After he was nominated by the President in March, the Senate Banking Committee held a nominating hearing for Mr. Bernardi on April 21. However, because of disputes between Congress and the Administration over several current housing issues, Mr. Bernardi's nomination has been languishing in the Senate, with no move to get the nomination to the Senate floor for approval. A recess appointment is not permanent; it expires when Congress adjourns.

Mr. Bernardi was previously HUD's Assistant Secretary for Community Planning and Development.

Secretary Jackson Doubts Rental Housing Shortage in Press Club Remarks

HUD Secretary Alphonso Jackson astounded housing industry representatives, housing advocates, and low income people who heard him speak at the National Press Club luncheon on June 17 when he made the following assertion: "Rental housing is affordable and plentiful."

Mr. Jackson's remarks came as part of a speech titled, "Renewing America's Communities, Homeownership: Myth vs. Reality." Mr. Jackson spoke about the Administration's focus on increasing homeownership, especially among minor-

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POINT OF VIEW

by Sheila Crowley, President

Last Monday, I toured The Com mons at Grant in Columbus, OH, a model of the country's best housing for formerly homeless and other single people who rely on disability income or low wage jobs. It is a beautiful building in a great neighborhood that is home to 100 people, most of whom can afford to live there because project-based vouchers were committed by the Columbus Housing Authority as part of the financing that made the deal possible. City officials are justifiably proud of this housing. I was the bearer of the news that other developments that could replicate what they had done had come to a screeching halt as a result of HUD's actions to destabilize the housing voucher program.

On Tuesday, I was in Des Moises, IA, where I was told by a state housing official that he was going to visit an owner of a manufacturing company whose business was doing so well that the owner wanted to add a third shift and go to a 24-hour operation. The problem was that there is not enough affordable housing in the community where the plant is to accommodate an expansion of his workforce. He wants the state to build more housing. The state official was going to tell him that the state was not in a position to provide housing for the plant owner's workforce who he only pays $8.00 an hour.

On Wednesday, I read about the Mayor of Washington, DC, announcing his 10-year plan to end homelessness that includes developing 6,000 units of support-

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NATIONAL LOW INCOME HOUSING COALITION

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

the April 22 notice and HUD's recent miscalculation of agencies' administrative fees. Senator Cantwell said she understands that HUD is attempting to correct its error on administrative fees, and asked to be notified when PHAs are told that this underfunding is resolved.

Senator Cantwell reminded Mr. Jackson that she and other senators sent a letter in May urging HUD to return to the original method of calculating voucher costs, which would solve agencies' problems. In the meantime, however, she urged HUD to take immediate action to relieve the acute shortfalls affecting communities such as Tacoma, WA. She urged that communities experiencing the most drastic cuts be allowed to make up their shortfalls over the course of the calendar year, rather than by the end of their fiscal years, which for Tacoma is June 30.

In the House, Ranking Financial Services Committee Member Barney Frank (D-MA) will convene a symposium on what he is calling "the mounting negative impact of the Administration's April 22 decision to cut reimbursements for Section 8 housing vouchers." Advocates and housing authority representatives will join Mr. Frank at the event, which will be held Monday, June 21, at 11:30 am in room 2220 of the House Rayburn Building. Mr. Frank is the lead sponsor of the House bill (H.R. 4263) that would require HUD to reverse its funding formula changes. Nine Members of Congress joined the bill in the past week, for a total of 110 cosponsors. Similar legislation in the Senate, S.2467, has 22 cosponsors.

While neither HUD nor Congress has taken action to solve the FY04 voucher funding crisis, housing authorities around the country continue to struggle to solve their shortfall problems. The St. Paul Housing Authority, for example, held a public hearing on June 15 to discuss option for averting its $3 million shortfall, which include reducing payment standards and renegotiating contracts with landlords, in an attempt to avoid canceling 400 vouchers. A report from the St. Paul Pioneer Press noted the work of advocates on the issue. "A petition to get HUD to restore the funds circulated through the standing-room-only audience of about 170 people, as did voter registration cards," the paper reported.

NLIHC sent out a call to action on June 16 urging Coalition members to help fight the administration's 2004 housing voucher cuts by calling members of Congress and the White House. The call to action, plus more information, is at www.nlihc.org/news/Sec8-04.html.

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

ity families, and suggested that those who express concerns about whether homeownership is the answer for everyone are playing to stereotypes. "I did not come here with a paternalistic and patronizing attitude," he said. Mr. Jackson emphasized the Administration's recently enacted American Dream Downpayment program and its Zero Down Payment initiative.

While the room was filled largely with HUD employees, Mr. Jackson received a handful of questions on the recent cuts to the housing voucher program that are leading housing authorities to consider terminating contracts with landlords. Referring to the title of his speech, Mr. Jackson said, "That is another myth. Nobody is facing evictions." He said that agencies facing funding problems had caused their own problems through overleasing, and that HUD is working with these agencies.

Mr. Jackson's address was preceded by a Kerry Campaign press conference at which Representative Barney Frank (D-MA) and former HUD Secretary Andrew Cuomo criticized the cuts to the housing voucher program. "There is a tremendous housing crisis in this country and this administration is making it worse," Mr. Cuomo said.

Neg-Reg Deliberations End

After a lengthy process, the Public Housing Operating Fund Negotiated Rulemaking (Neg-Reg) Committee has completed work on determining a new formula for the operating funds that public housing authorities (PHAs) receive. While there were small victories for residents and public housing authorities in the final outcome, HUD appears to have been successful in largely implementing its agenda. The final vote of 25-1 sets the stage for the beginning of the shift to a project-based management and accounting system for operating public housing.

The new rule will be approved by the Secretary and, following some additional clearances, will be published in the Federal Register for a 60-day public comment period. While work on the rule is now complete, it is expected that refinements and appeals will continue as the rule is implemented.

The new funding plan will move PHAs from the current allowable-expense level funding to funding based on individual projects. This means that PHAs would receive operating funds based on their individual properties, as opposed to being funded at a PHA-level as they currently are. This new formula is based on a study by the Harvard Graduate School of Design that

*(See **HUD** on p. 4)*

Capitol Hill

Budget Unlikely; House Set to Consider Dangerous Spending Limit Bill

It appears increasingly likely that a budget resolution could be dead for the year. While the House has passed a bill setting broad guidelines for spending limits in 2005, Senators Bill Frist (R-TN) and Don Nickles (R-OK) are still struggling to find common ground between the moderates and conservatives in the Senate on the pay-as-you-go issue. As currently written, the pay-as-you-go component would require increases to discretionary programs to be paid for, while not requiring offsets for new tax cuts.

Meanwhile, it is possible that the House could consider legislation the week of that would dictate the budget process for years to come. The House has scheduled H.R. 3793 for floor action, but the leadership is not sure that it has the votes needed to pass the bill.

There are two pieces to the budget process legislation, one controversial among the Republican caucus, and one not. The pay-as-you-go rule is not a problem, as the caucus generally agrees that offsets should be provided for discretionary spending increases but not tax cuts. But the second provision, which would place a five-year cap on discretionary programs, is more troublesome, with House Appropriations Committee Chair Bill Young (R-FL) saying that he and 35 other Republicans will vote against the bill on the floor if the five-year cap is retained. Mr. Young has agreed to a one-year cap, but so far negotiators have not met his request. If the issue is not solved, the bill could be pulled from the schedule.

As the budget is essentially a blueprint for Congressional appropriators, Congress's lack of a budget resolution has stalled work on FY05 appropriations. The appropriations committees have not as yet scheduled a date for the VA/HUD bill to be considered, and the Congressional session is drawing to a close. It is becoming increasingly likely that Congress will either to try to package several appropriations bills and pass them as a group, or that it will decide to pass a continuing resolution that would fund programs based on current levels through the start of the 2005 fiscal year, which begins October 1.

This week, House Appropriations Committee Chair Jim Walsh (R-NY) was quoted in the *Syracuse Post Standard* saying that that President Bush's proposed cut for the housing voucher program in FY05 "won't pass." Mr. Walsh went on to say that his goal is to provide at least level funding for the Section 8 program. Advocates hope that this means Mr. Walsh will provide the additional money necessary above that requested in the budget to ensure all Section 8 vouchers holders will be funded.

Rural Rental Program Slashed 48%

The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture and Rural Development met late on June 14 and completed work on an FY05 spending bill for USDA and related agencies. Few details are yet available, but following the Administration's budget request, appropriators sharply cut the Section 515 low income rural rental housing to $60 million, from $116 million in 2004. The 515 program is one of the only surviving federal bricks-and-mortar efforts to build low income rental housing. In 1980, more than 38,000 housing units were built under the program; by 1994 this number had dropped to 11,000. In 2003, fewer than 1,000 units were constructed.

Section 502 direct low and very low income single-family loans would also be cut to the level request by the President, from $1.37 billion in 2004 to $1.1 billion. Guaranteed single-family 502 loans (which function more like FHA mortgage insurance) would rise to $3.31 billion, from $2.73 billion in 2004.

The full Appropriations Committee is expected to mark up this bill on June 23.

Time for TANF Growing Short

The TANF program will expire at the end of June if no action is taken by Congress in the coming days. Since 2002, when the program was first due for reauthorization, it has been extended six times. Advocates believe that the program will see at least one more, and likely two, extensions before the House and Senate can agree on terms for reauthorization.

The Senate work on the TANF reauthorization bill includes some controversial policy changes (See *Memo,* April 2). There is almost no chance the bill will pass before the program expires on June 30, and only a slim chance that it will make it out of the 108th Congress.

Advocates believe that the House will pass on June 22 or 23 Representative Wally Herger's (R-CA) short-term extension through September. His bill contains no changes to the program. Some in the Senate, however, would like to see policy changes, such as marriage promotion funds, attached to an extension.

Advocates are hoping that if there is no bill this year, they will be able to convince Congress to pass a lengthier extension containing no policy changes. Funding the program only three months at a time causes instability for the state governments administering the

(See **Capitol Hill** *on p.9)*

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

was supposed to measure the true cost of managing well-run public housing, but instead measured the cost of managing well-run FHA housing. Despite HUD's own admission at the meetings that the study was flawed, HUD chose to adopt the study and use it as a basis for this new formula.

The new formula takes effect on October 1, 2004, with an 18-month transition period. By January 1, 2006, subsidy payments based on the new formula will begin for the 13,000 public housing developments. During the meetings there was strong support for providing public housing agencies funding of $100 million to $150 million to aid in the transition by training staff and upgrading accounting systems, but HUD refused to agree to this funding level and instead agreed to a lesser amount.

A number of factors will go into determining each agency's new project-based expense level. The formula will be calculated on eligible unit months that will allow for up to 3% vacancies. Agencies will also be able to receive operating funds for vacant units that are undergoing modernization and those used for resident services. Factors used in calculating the project expense level under the new formula will include the size of the project, age of property, unit size, building type, and occupancy types, location neighborhood, poverty rate percent of households assisted, ownership type (non-profit, for-profit, etc.) and will contain a geographic co-efficient.

Committee members also debated the method of calculating the cost of utilities. While there will no longer be a utility adjustment at the end of the year, the funding formula will be based on a 12-month historical average cost of utilities, adjusted for inflation.

On a positive note for residents, housing agencies will be able to continue to calculate $25 per occupied unit for the resident participation fund in their formula calculations.

According to the final rule, HUD plans by the year 2011 to base funding on each project's actual costs. In 2009, the agency will have to convene a panel to compare funding based on the formula with actual cost data. If agencies lose funding under the new formula, they will be able to limit any reduction to 5 % of the difference between their old and new subsidy levels if they are able to complete the transition to project-based accounting and management by October 5, 2005.

Towards the end of the final Neg-Reg committee meeting, the resident representatives to the committee asked to be allowed to submit a statement for inclusion in the official record. They were granted that request, and they sent a letter dated June 15 to Assistant Secretary Michael Liu expressing the resident representatives' continued concerns about the process and outcome of the rule.

They repeated their concerns that only two residents were included in the committee of 28, and that they felt that resident recommendations were repeatedly dismissed and ignored. The residents said that not including the National Low Income Housing Coalition on the panel was a grave omission, and they reiterated their view that the Harvard Cost Study was not a viable way to judge the costs of operating well-managed public housing. The letter also outlined a number of other concerns regarding utility costs, resident services, and the fear that HUD intends to cut federal operating funds over the next decade and steer PHAs towards borrowing money from the private sector to make up for these funding losses.

Advocates Await Release of Proposed Fair Market Rents

While the data for the proposed 2005 Fair Market Rents (FMRs) have apparently been ready for quite some time, HUD has yet to release them to the public. Time is getting short to allow for both a 60-day comment period and additional time for HUD staff to incorporate any changes before the final publication deadline. The U.S. Housing Act of 1937 requires the HUD Secretary to publish FMRs annually to be effective on October 1 of each year.

This year, the proposed FMRs are likely to generate more discussion than usual. Rental markets and utility prices have been mixed throughout the year, and this year's FMRs will have been re-benchmarked using distributions from 2000 Census data. Moreover, some advocates are concerned that the Administration's attempts to modify the funding formula for Section 8 vouchers may be at play in the FMR delay, given that FMRs are used, among other things, to determine payment standards in the voucher program.

HUD Issues Annual Performance Plan

In late May, HUD released its FY05 Annual Performance Plan (APP). According to HUD Secretary Alphonso Jackson, "The FY 2005 APP addresses all the major priorities of the Department, including implementation of President's Management Agenda."

The APP is organized around HUD's six strategic goals: increasing homeownership opportunities; promoting decent affordable housing; strengthening communi-

*(See **HUD** on p. 5)*

HUD *(cont'd from p. 4)*

ties; ensuring equal opportunity in housing; embracing high standards of ethics, management and accountability; and promoting participation of faith-based and community organizations. The APP describes the objectives supporting each of these goal and the means and strategies the department will use to fulfill those objectives. The APP provides substantial details about HUD's programs and plans.

Homeownership has top billing in the APP, which raises concerns among some advocates, as HUD's focus on homeownership and the accompanying rhetoric tend to detract from rental housing. Given the shortage in rental housing opportunities, especially for the lowest income people, HUD's stated goal in the APP of increasing the number of voucher-assisted homeowners by 20% in FY05 adds to these concerns, as fewer vouchers would be available to support rental housing. In addition, HUD's ambitions for voucher homeownership seem contradictory to its FY04 voucher funding policy, which has eroded faith in the viability of voucher program as a whole, including the homeownership component.

The APP reveals some other inconsistencies between HUD's goals and objectives and its actions and proposals. For instance, the APP states that HUD is "dedicated to helping more Americans—especially minorities—realize the dream [of homeownership] for themselves." The APP describes HUD's proposal to provide $200 million in downpayment assistance in FY05. The APP does not, however, mention the Administration's plan to cut funding for the program in FY06 by $53 million, as is revealed in OMB five-year budget projections.

Even in its goal to promote decent affordable housing, which is intended to encompass HUD's housing activities outside of homeownership, the APP states that HUD plans to maximize the number of homeowners served by the HOME program. The APP also claims that public and assisted housing programs are intended to increase residents' self-sufficiency. As evidence of this, HUD expects average earnings among non-elderly, non-disabled public housing and voucher tenants to increase by 5%. HUD's Flexible Voucher and Freedom to House proposals, were they adopted by Congress, would assist in this effort—though not by increasing the incomes of existing tenants. Rather, public housing agencies (PHAs), either by choice or by necessity because of insufficient funding, would have the authority under these proposals to serve a greater percentage of higher-income tenants.

The APP objective of increasing self-sufficiency also runs counter to HUD's proposals in connection with the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program, which helps public housing and voucher tenants by providing job and other counseling and an escrow account equivalent to increases in their earnings over five years to use for education or purchasing a home, among other permitted uses. Under the APP, HUD plans to increase by 5% the number of FSS families whose predominant source of income is earned income, and increase by 3% the total number of PHAs administering FSS programs. But HUD proposes zeroing out funding for FSS coordinators in FY05, compared to $48 million provided by Congress in FY03 and FY04.

Under its goal of strengthening communities, the APP includes HUD's objective of ending long-term homelessness in 10 years, as well as helping other homeless families find affordable housing. The department's policy on FY04 voucher funding and its FY05 budget proposal that would leave the voucher program $1.6 billion short of the funding needed for current vouchers in FY05 could have the effect of increasing rather than decreasing homelessness. Under the APP goal of embracing high standards of ethics, management and accountability, HUD will aim to reduce rental assistance overpayments, which HUD estimates accounts for $2 billion. The APP is vague, however, about whether HUD will seek to reduce the incidence of *under*payments.

The APP is available at www.hud.gov/offices/cfo/reports/2005/2005app.pdf.

National Housing Trust Fund

Senate Cosponsorship Jumps to 18

The addition of four Senators to S. 1411 this week brings the total number of Senate cosponsors of National Housing Trust Fund Campaign legislation to 18. Senators Mary Landrieu (D-LA), Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), Tim Johnson (D-SD) and Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) are the new cosponsors. National Housing Trust Fund legislation in the House, H.R. 1102, remains at 213 cosponsors.

A full list of cosponsors for both the Senate and House is at www.nhtf.org.

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.

Update from the Field

Subcommittee Explores Problematic Practices in the Poconos

The Subcommittee on Capital Markets, Insurance, and Government-Sponsored Enterprises of the House Financial Services Committee held a field hearing on June 14 at East Stroudsburg University in Pennsylvania. The hearing was titled "Broken Dreams in the Poconos: The Response of the Secondary Mortgage Markets and Implications for Federal Legislation" and focused on the causes of above-average foreclosure rates in Monroe County, PA, and possible responses. Subcommittee Chair Richard Baker (R-LA) and Ranking Member Paul Kanjorski (D-PA), who represents Monroe County, conducted the hearing that had an audience of 200, including many homeowners.

As several witnesses and Mr. Kanjorski pointed out, the *Pocono Record* first brought attention to the foreclosure problems in the area in 2001. In April of 2004, the *New York Times* ran two in-depth articles about New York City renters being lured to the Poconos to become homeowners only to find themselves victims of problematic real estate transactions and enduring hours of commuting to jobs in New York. In his statement, Mr. Kanjorski noted that, in 2002, the foreclosure-to-sales rate in Monroe County was 29%, as compared to less than 1% nationwide.

Pennsylvania has commissioned the Reinvestment Fund to research and report on the extent and characteristics of the real estate problems in the Poconos. Ira Goldstein of the Reinvestment Fund presented a preview of the report's findings to the Subcommittee. According to the study, Monroe County experienced growth in population and housing between 1990 and 2002 at rates that far outstripped Pennsylvania as a whole. The migration of New York and New Jersey residents played a significant role in the population increase. The new residents from these states were more likely than earlier Monroe County residents to be married, have children, have a higher income, live in newly constructed housing, and be African-American or Latino.

The Reinvestment Fund's study also found that foreclosures in Monroe County increased from 388 in 1995 to 940 in 2003; those numbers would have been even higher without the state's foreclosure prevention program. The increase in population alone does not account for the entire increase in foreclosures, making foreclosure rates in Monroe County inconsistent with the rates in other counties. Mr. Goldstein found clusters of foreclosures in certain townships in the county, and found the greatest concentrations of foreclosures in areas with greater percentages of African-American and Latino residents.

Other witnesses described the problematic building and lending practices that have contributed to the foreclosure problems in Monroe County, described their own efforts to combat these practices, and made recommendations for federal and state policy changes. Among the practices highlighted were collusion between builders and appraisers to overprice shoddily constructed homes, which were causing buyers to borrow funds for more than the homes were worth, as well as fraudulent and predatory practices in mortgage lending and servicing.

Subcommittee Members also heard from officials at Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, who described how they used their leverage to try to address the foreclosure problems in the Poconos. Two Monroe County homeowners also testified. Maureen McGrath, founder of National Advocacy Against Mortgage Servicing Fraud, recommended that borrowers be allowed to change servicers, which would force servicers to compete for borrowers' business and provide better service. Al Wilson, who discovered that his own home had been overpriced and subject to a questionable appraisal, helped establish the Pocono Homeowners Defense Association (PHDA). Mr. Wilson urged Congress to pass stronger legislation to regulate the real estate and mortgage industries, without preempting state and local predatory lending laws, as well as increase funding for homebuyer education. Of PHDA's efforts, Mr. Wilson testified, "We have done much already, but it is only the tip of the iceberg when looking at what needs to be done."

Testimony by building and real estate interests endeavored to downplay the problems in the Poconos and deflect blame from their own industries. A local realtor described the disclosures and notice provided to homebuyers when they enter into a relationship with a real estate agent. He also urged the subcommittee to focus on the thousands of people who had the opportunity to become homeowners, rather than those who had problems. A representative of the Pocono Builders Association claimed that the population growth and foreclosure rates in the Poconos are not unique and blamed foreclosure problems on lenders and appraisers, rather than contractor fraud or poor workmanship. A representative of the appraisal industry testified that the problems with appraisals in home sales in the Poconos were the result of poor regulation of appraisers and urged changes to the appraiser licensing system.

In response to the problems described, *The* (Allentown) *Morning Call* reported that Mr. Kanjorski suggested better education, counseling and support for first-time homebuyers. His staff is reported to be developing legislation along these lines.

Housing in the Elections

Advocates Plan Homeless and Low Income Voter Registration Day

As Election Day draws near, a Massachusetts group is asking organizations around the country to join them in setting aside Thursday, July 22, as a day to hold voter registration and other events to encourage low income and homeless people to become active voters.

While many homeless and low income voters are already registered to vote, the July events will be geared toward engaging those who are not already active in the civic process. The rallies and events being planned for various cities around the country will offer ways for people to register to vote while learning abut candidates, current issues, and the importance of voting this November.

The concept of a series of national events grew out of a rally being planned by the homeless residents of Pine Street Inn in Boston, as the residents looked for a way to increase their efforts. Pine Street residents have been registering people in the community as well as doing outreach work to other local homeless organizations and advocacy groups. Their rally, which will include food, music and various speakers, will provide an opportunity both to reach unregistered homeless and low income citizens and to provide them with information on voting and voting rights.

The residents of the Pine Street Inn have been able to generate so much interest that the staff thought it would send a strong message to those seeking office and elected officials if organizations all over the country could work together to make it a national event. "To say that on one day, across the country, homeless and low income voters will be registering to vote would be such a powerful message," said Aimee Coolidge of Pine Street Inn.

The Boston rally will take place at noon on July 22 at the Christian Science Center. Homeless individuals trained to assist in the registration process will register voters at the event.

Another of the events already planned for July 22 will be held by the Partnership for the Homeless in New York City. Paige Sayle of the Partnership reports that the organization is planning a block party at Peter's Place, one of their drop-in centers in the midtown Chelsea area. The group will also train homeless individuals in the registration process so that they can register voters at the event. Other pending events at the block party include music from the Peter's Place Players, art exhibits from local artists, and information tables with literature about candidates' issues and voting rights. "This is a great idea and I hope other advocacy groups across the country will plan events of their own," Ms. Sayle said. "Events such as these are too important to ignore."

Partnership for the Homeless has registered more than 1,000 voters in the New York City area. They host events throughout the year as well as provide educational materials for homeless and low income voters. For this year's election, they will recruit volunteers to transport voters to the polls to ensure they cast their vote.

Organizations across the country are encouraged to plan their own voter registration events on or around July 22. For more information or event suggestions, contact Katie Fisher at 202-662-1530 x222.

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Resources

Hate Crimes Against People Experiencing Homelessness in 2003

A new report by the National Coalition for the Homeless uses press and shelter reports to document the persistent pattern of hate crimes and violence against homeless people in the United States. In addition, the report notes a growing trend in the mainstream media in which homeless people are used as the targets of exploitative or degrading humor.

The report, *Hate, Violence, and Death on Main Street USA,* is the fifth in an annual series tracking hate crimes against the homeless. In 2003, according to NCH's compilation of news articles and reports from homeless shelters, at least 70 violent acts – nine of them lethal – were committed against people experiencing homelessness. The report details each of these crimes in a month-by-month description, including instances where homeless people were beaten with baseball bats, shot, raped, stabbed, or set on fire. In the last five years, their research has documented 131 homeless people killed and an additional 150 made the victims of violent crimes.

Also included in the report is a month-by-month listing of hateful actions and speech directed at homeless people by radio stations, newspapers, and politicians. This trend towards using the homeless as targets of ridicule and abuse is exemplified by the five recent "bum videos," in which homeless people are promised food, money, or alcohol in return for performing dangerous and humiliating stunts. The videos are available at mainstream retailers, including Best Buy, Tower Records, Borders, and FYE. Other retailers, including Amazon.com, Target, Virgin Mega Stores, Barnes and Noble, and Blockbuster.com have stopped selling the videos following requests from NCH.

NCH closes the report by providing suggestions for action, including a proposal for a GAO investigation on the extent of violence against the homeless and an examination of the perpetrators of these crimes. The report includes a sample resolution calling for this investigation, as well as examples of legislation proposed and enacted to combat hate crimes against people experiencing homelessness.

The report is available from www.nationalhomeless.org/hatecrimes.

NHC Examines Employer-Assisted Hsg

The National Housing Conference (NHC) has released a new report in the *Affordable Housing Policy Review* series describing a variety of private-sector initiatives to promote neighborhood revitalization and affordable housing development. The report, which grew out of a series of roundtable discussions with business and community leaders, highlights Employer-Assisted Housing (EAH) programs. NHC finds that EAH benefits employers, employees, and communities by stabilizing the workforce, lowering commute times, and increasing investment in local neighborhoods.

Private Sector Partnerships: Investing in Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization looks at EAH programs in Chicago, Milwaukee, Seattle, and Portland in which employers help families afford downpayment and closing costs when buying a home located near their workplace. These cities contain several models of EAH, including affinity programs, corporate giving programs, and forgivable loan programs. EAH benefits are growing in popularity; Fannie Mae, which provides technical assistance to more than 600 employers that offer the benefit, notes that three-quarters of employers with EAH programs started them within the past four years.

The report also showcases several other private-sector partnership initiatives, including the Phillips Partnership in Minneapolis and the City Heights redevelopment initiative in San Diego, which successfully revitalized troubled neighborhoods, and the statewide Commonwealth Housing Task Force in Massachusetts, which formulated housing policy. All three of these projects involved new levels of cooperation between businesses, nonprofits, and governments. The report details how the entities successfully organized resources and information from different sources and built bridges across public agency jurisdictions.

The report is available at www.nhc.org/PrivateSectorFinal04.pdf.

Fact of the Week

Housing Cost Burdens of Single-Earner Households

Hourly earnings	Moderately cost burdened (%)	Severely cost burdened (%)	Total, mod. or sev. cost burdened (%)
Less than minimum wage	18	39	57
100%-200% of min. wage	30	25	55
200%-300% of min. wage	25	9	34
Over 300% of min. wage	14	5	19
All	21	16	37

Source: *The State of the Nation's Housing 2004,* Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University.

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

ive housing. He was joined by Philip Mangano, Executive Director of the Interagency Council on the Homeless. They made no mention that the DC Housing Authority was not issuing any turnover vouchers in order to cope with HUD's FY04 voucher funding crisis.

On Thursday, I attended HUD Secretary Alphonso Jackson's speech at the National Press Club and heard him say that "rental housing is affordable and plentiful" in the United States. My shock was minor compared to that of Mrs. Alberta Williams, who was sitting next to me. Mrs. Williams resides at N Street Village in DC, a transitional shelter for women. She is trying to find an affordable unit to rent in DC and has been on the voucher waiting list for five years. She had just learned that the DC Housing Authority would not be issuing new vouchers. Thursday was also the day that the U.S House of Representatives passed a $140 billion corporate tax cut bill with apparently no regard for how much deeper it would drive the federal government into deficit and debt.

Friday, I went camping with my granddaughters at a wonderful campground in the Blue Ridge Mountains built in 1937 by the Civilian Conservation Corps and still run by the U.S. Forest Service. I told them that this was their federal government at work and was one of many reasons why paying taxes is the right thing to do.

Capitol Hill *(cont'd from p. 3)*

program, and trying to incorporate policy changes into an extension does not allow Congress to make truly comprehensive decisions based on the results of the TANF program over the last eight years.

New Legislation

On June 16, Representative William Jefferson (D-LA) introduced H.R. 4594. This bill would double the maximum new market tax credits and was referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means.

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/.

NLIHC News

NLIHC Seeks Policy Analyst

NLIHC seeks staff member to track, analyze, and advocate on federal legislative and regulatory issues related to NLIHC mission. Reports to Deputy Director. Qualifications include highly developed communication and policy analysis skills, knowledge of federal housing policy, and commitment to housing justice. Direct experience with the legislative process a plus. Masters' preferred. Send cover letter and resume to Deputy Director, NLIHC, 1012 14th St. NW, Suite 610, Washington, DC 20005. Applications accepted until position is filled. EE0/AA.

National Low Income Housing Coalition
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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.

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