

Health Care for the Homeless Mobilizer

The National Health Care for the Homeless Council

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Turn Back Attack on Voting Rights

New language inserted into an important housing reform bill would prohibit voter registration activities at nonprofit organizations and other housing agencies working with low-income individuals and families. Advocates must act now to maintain open access to voter registration for low-income Americans and to protect the ability of housing providers to participate in nonpartisan registration activities.

Affordable Housing Fund Within Reach

At long last, the Federal Housing Finance Reform Act will come to a vote on the floor of the House during the week of October 24. Upon its passage, H.R. 1461 will establish a new Federal regulator for two government-sponsored mortgage giants, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, and set aside 5% of their after-tax profits into an Affordable Housing Fund (see July 6 [Mobilizer](#)). The bill was ordered out of the Committee on Financial Services in May by a 65-5 bipartisan vote but stalled in the Judiciary Committee over the summer. The Speaker of the House is now moving the legislation forward in response to the spike in urgent housing needs along the Gulf Coast.

A Poison Pill Amendment

In advance of the upcoming vote, a bloc of conservative House members known as the Republican Study Committee (RSC) has pressured Rep. Michael Oxley, Financial Services Chairman, to amend H.R. 1461. The amendment prohibits any nonprofit organization participating in voter registration activities from participating in the Affordable Housing Fund (AHF). Additionally, nonprofits sharing even loose affiliations with a lobbying organization (overlapping board members, shared resources, etc.) may be deemed ineligible to receive AHF dollars.

The language added to H.R. 1461 would force nonprofits to make an untenable choice between providing stable housing to their clients and helping them exercise their constitutional right to vote. The justification for this provision – a fear that AHF dollars might be used for political purposes rather than for housing – is specious, as the bill already includes highly restrictive language governing the use of AHF money. The voter registration provisions are an undemocratic, thinly veiled attempt to suppress the vote of people with low incomes.

ACTION:

On Wednesday, October 19, the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) sent Speaker Dennis Hastert a letter endorsed by 62 national organizations, including the National Health Care for the Homeless Council, decrying the amendment to H.R. 1461 and affirming that “nothing is worth compromising the right of all Americans to participate in our precious democracy.” The

National Health Care for the Homeless Council urges *Mobilizer* readers to support our long-standing goal of an Affordable Housing Fund *and* to protect democratic rights in these ways:

- **Contact your Representative TODAY!** Call the Capitol switchboard toll-free, thanks to the NLIHC, at 1-866-864-6483 to oppose the restrictions on voter registration in H.R. 1461. Tell him or her that HR 1461 should be adopted exactly as it was reported from the Committee on Financial Services. The floor vote is expected to take place on October 26 or 27.
- **Send the NLIHC examples of how these restrictions affect you or organizations with whom you are affiliated.** NLIHC staff seek input from nonprofits who might be negatively impacted by the restrictions on voter registration. Send your examples to linda@nlihc.org.
- **Visit the “Action Center”** of the National Housing Trust Fund Campaign for more information -- www.nhtf.org.
- **Circulate this information widely, and encourage everyone you know to participate!** The Affordable Housing Fund in H.R. 1461 can permanently house countless displaced families on the Gulf Coast and across the country, and it is imperative that the bill’s focus not be obscured by the poison pill amendment. Act now!

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