

Health Care for the Homeless Mobilizer

The National Health Care for the Homeless Council

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The American Dream, Deferred

Advocating for affordable housing after twenty years of McKinney

Upon taking office as Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi vowed that the 110th Congress would set a new course for America – one that provides more opportunity to attain the American Dream of home ownership and stability. Unfortunately, that dream remains impossibly out of reach for our most vulnerable friends and neighbors. As we mark the 20th Anniversary of the Stewart B. McKinney Homelessness Assistance Act, itself an ameliorative measure, at best, decent affordable housing remains unavailable and unattainable for many low-income Americans; this leads to the experience of homelessness for at least 3.5 million men, women, and children each year. The National Health Care for the Homeless Council calls upon *Mobilizer* readers to increase their advocacy for the fundamental solutions to homelessness, among them a renewed national investment in affordable housing. One step toward this goal is the swift passage of a National Housing Trust Fund.

Priced Out & Bottomed Out

Following the first time on record that household incomes failed to increase for five straight years (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006), housing remains unavailable for extremely low-income families. In fact, there is not a single congressional district in America where an extremely low-income family can afford housing at the fair market rent (National Low-Income Housing Coalition, 2006), and nearly three decades of cuts to HUD-sponsored subsidized housing leaves hundreds of thousands of families on public housing waiting lists. As a result, many households pay more than 30% of their incomes for rent, live in substandard housing, and remain at great risk of homelessness. In Nashville, Tennessee, the fair market rent for a two-bedroom apartment is \$693 per month. In San Francisco, one of the most expensive jurisdictions in the nation, the same apartment costs \$1,551 per month. Across the country in Boston, a two-bedroom apartment goes for the monthly rent of \$1366. With market-rate housing out of reach and subsidized housing unavailable, extremely low income people frequently become displaced and homeless.

Reaching Consensus on a National Housing Trust Fund

To begin to address the extreme shortage of affordable housing for low-income Americans, the National Council joins the National Low-Income Housing Coalition and other advocates in supporting a National Housing Trust Fund to produce, rehabilitate, and preserve 1.5 million units of affordable housing over the next ten years. To achieve this goal, the trust fund should be capitalized with dedicated and sufficient sources of revenue throughout the next decade.

Housing advocates, including *Mobilizer* readers, have pushed for years to achieve dedicated source of funding for affordable housing and recently attained a significant victory. On May 22, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 1427 – the Federal Housing Financial Reform Act of 2007 – known as the Government Sponsored Enterprises (GSE) regulatory reform bill. This reserves

approximately \$600 million a year from GSE's Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac as a dedicated source of funding for a future National Housing Trust Fund. The Senate next will consider this bill at a yet-to-be-determined time in the near future. In the coming weeks, the House also may act upon H.R. 1852 – the Expanding Home Ownership act of 2007 – which reserves an additional \$250 million per year for a National Housing Trust Fund.

We anticipate that actual legislation to establish a National Housing Trust Fund will be introduced in the House of Representatives during the summer by Congressman Barney Frank (D-MA), chair of the House Committee on Financial Services. Until then, housing activists are encouraged to advocate both for the introduction of National Housing Trust Fund legislation and for additional sources of Trust Fund funding. Stay tuned to the *Mobilizer* for additional information.

ACTION

- **Read the National HCH Council's policy statement on housing** at <http://www.nhchc.org/Advocacy/PolicyPapers/Housing2007.pdf>
- **Call or visit your Members of Congress** to inform them about need for affordable housing in your community and the importance of a National Housing Trust Fund. For talking points, visit the National Low-Income Housing Coalition at: <http://www.nlihc.org/doc/041207nhtftalkingpoints.pdf>. For specific statistics about housing affordability in your home town, check out the latest *Out of Reach* report at <http://www.nlihc.org/oor/>. Find out who represents you at www.house.gov, www.senate.org or call the Capitol Switchboard at 202-224-2131.
- **Endorse the National Housing Trust Fund.** More than 5,600 organizations and local leaders have endorsed the campaign. Is your organization on the list? Register your endorsement at <http://www.nlihc.org/endorsers/signup.cfm>.

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