

Health Care for the Homeless Mobilizer

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Legislative Progress for Affordable Housing

Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and Forward Motion

Advocates for affordable housing are uniting in support of the Federal Housing Reform Act – introduced as H.R. 1461 by Rep. Richard Baker (R-LA) – and the help of *Mobilizer* readers is now needed to ensure its timely consideration and passage. The bill, which was approved by the House Committee on Financial Services with nearly unanimous bipartisan support, would strengthen federal regulation of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac and expand the missions of the two mortgage giants to provide significantly more affordable housing. The legislation requires that at least 5% of the organizations' profits (after taxes) be dedicated to the production, preservation, and rehabilitation of affordable rental housing, as well as assistance for first-time homebuyers. Funds must be used for direct housing purposes only (not administrative costs). While there is no specific income targeting in the bill, there is a preference for projects that benefit families with extremely low incomes. It is estimated that the 5% clause will provide between \$400 and \$600 million in the first several years, increasing to as much as \$1 billion annually over time. The National Health Care for the Homeless Council has long supported the mission of the National Housing Trust Fund Campaign, and we join with them now to bring to fruition the potential of H.R. 1461 to grow the stock of affordable housing in the United States.

The spin begins

Though members of both Parties stood firmly in support of the Act's affordable housing provisions (its expedient passage out of its committee was unquestionably an act of solidarity), the bill's further movement is encountering resistance from many Members of Congress and even on the editorial page of the *Wall Street Journal*. Opponents decry the regulations as a free market impediment and carelessly brand as a "slush fund" the legislation's affordable housing requirements. Nonetheless, such reactionary talking points will not hold up against a strong grassroots push in support of the H.R. 1461. As similar legislation is being drafted in the Senate, advocates must insist that the House leadership bring the Federal Housing Reform Act to the floor and that all Members vote for its passage.

ACTION:

The Federal Housing Reform Act's 93% approval in the Committee on Financial Services was a legislative home run, and its current support and momentum suggest that this is a battle we can and will win. Congress will be on recess from July 1 until July 11, and *Mobilizer* readers are strongly encouraged to call and visit their Senators and Representatives at their district offices with the message that H.R. 1461 resonates strongly with their values and concerns as voters.

Imagine a United States with 1,500,000 additional units of affordable housing. Now make that image real.

- **Visit (or contact) your Member's district office between July 1 and July 11** to stress the importance of the affordable housing provisions of H.R. 1461. Your legislators' district office information is available at www.house.gov or www.senate.gov.
- **Access the "Heat Up For Housing" toolkit** provided by the National Housing Trust Fund Campaign and the National Low Income Housing Coalition. The toolkit includes a summary of the bill (as reported by the Committee), sample letters to Congress and the media, tips for visits, State-by-State housing data, and much more. It is available online at www.nhtf.org/toolkit.asp.

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