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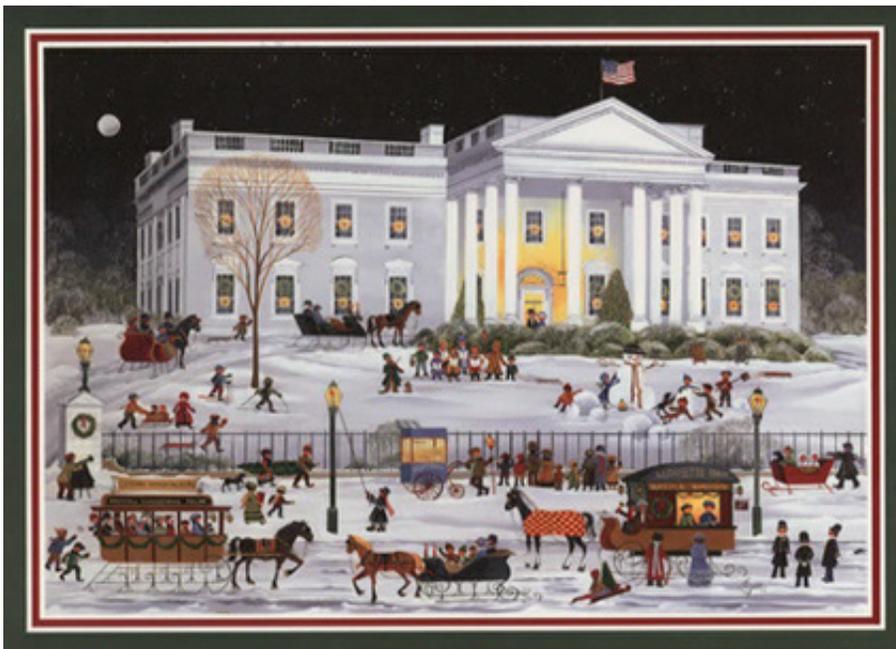

# Mobilizer

*Health Care for the Homeless Action Bulletin*

December 18, 2014 | Volume XIX No. 8

## Holiday Gifts from Congress & New Year's Resolutions for Advocates

*Preparing for Advocacy in the Year Ahead*



The end of 2014 and the 113th Congress have brought both housing and health care gifts. Congress recently approved a full-year spending bill funding Health Centers at \$5.1 billion, **the highest level in the program's history**. The bill includes \$19.3 billion in Housing Choice Vouchers, a modest \$127 million increase. Combined with important policy changes, Public Housing Authorities may issue as many as **40,000 new vouchers in 2015**. Outside of Congress, the



As 2015 approaches, resolve to partner (or more closely partner) with the Council's policy team to push for policies that prevent and end homelessness. Some things you can do now and in the New Year include:

### Working to prevent the primary care funding cliff.

- **Contact your new or returning members of Congress.**
- Find your current members of the House or Senate. Double check if they are returning to Congress using the tables in the Council's election analysis.
- Use this template to draft a letter of introduction.
- Contact their district office

Federal Housing Finance Agency will begin to allocate funds to the **National Housing Trust Fund (NHTF)** for the first time, providing new funding for affordable housing. None of this would have happened if people like you in the HCH community didn't advocate for these changes. Thank you!

These gains will be short-lived, however, if we don't continue to push for adequate funding for the health care and housing needed to end homelessness. The September 30, 2015 primary care funding cliff looms large over this year's Health Center allocation. Funding for the NHTF will be inadequate without further legislative changes. Threats to the safety net abound. Council staff will continue working to promote policies that reduce the burdens and incidence of homelessness, but we need your help. **As 2015 approaches, resolve to partner (or more closely partner) with the Council's policy team and let's ensure these gifts of 2014 keep on giving.**

## How You Can Help in the New Year

**Primary Care Funding Cliff**: Preventing the 70% reduction in Health Center funding caused by the expiration of ACA funds will be an HCH priority in the next Congress.

### Contact your new or returning members of Congress.

- Find your current members of the House or Senate. Double check if they are returning to Congress using the tables in the Council's election analysis.
- Use this template to draft a letter of introduction.
- Contact their district office and invite them to tour your project.

### Build local support through the Access is the Answer Campaign

- Use these templates to obtain support letters from local partners and elected officials.
- Use these templates to draft an op-ed, letter to the editor, or press release.

### Partner with Dan Rabbitt to set up a meeting with DC Congressional staff

- Contact Dan, the Council's Health Policy Organizer, or look for emails from him in the coming weeks.
- You can call into the meeting and help strengthen both your and the Council's relationship with your members' DC staff.

**National Housing Trust Fund**: While funds will finally begin to be allocated, additional reforms are needed for to ensure these funds continue and are substantial enough to address our affordable housing crisis. The immediate allocation is likely to provide at most \$500 million next year, but certain bills considered earlier this year could provide \$3 billion a year or more. While funds

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- You can call into the meeting and help strengthen both your and the Council's relationship with your members' DC staff.
- **Work to expand funding for the NHTF.**
- Endorse the United for Homes Campaign.
- The campaign seeks dedicated funding for the NHTF. Your endorsement will add strength the campaign and keep you informed about NHTF developments.
- Let the Council know if your project decides to endorse the campaign. We are aiming for 10 new endorsements!

### Further the Council's policy capacity.

- Correspond with Dan

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- Sign the Non-Defense Discretionary Letter to protect other sources of housing funding. State and local organizations are welcome!

**Partnering with the Council Policy Team:** The Council's advocacy strength comes from its members. Projects like Fourth Street Clinic in Salt Lake City, Mercy Care in Atlanta, Primary Health Care in Des Moines, and Kentucky Mountain Health Alliance in Hazard, KY make our work possible by providing information, making calls, and corresponding directly with Council staff. There are so many other projects who engage directly with our policy team, but we need even more to achieve meaningful policy change.

- **Correspond with Dan Rabbitt.** In addition to Mobilizers, Dan often reaches out directly to Council members about important Congressional issues. Keep an eye out for his emails and work with him to shape the Council's advocacy agenda.
- **Encourage staff, consumers, and Board to sign up for the Mobilizer.** Consider forwarding the Mobilizer signup page to your networks.
- **Become an organizational member.** Membership dues directly support our advocacy activities, supporting our policy staff, events, and trainings. Apply here or contact Development Coordinator Wade Munday for more information.

**Let us all resolve to work towards ending the systemic causes of homelessness in 2015. Thanks for all that you do!**

## Issues Background

**Year-end funding bill:** An Omnibus Appropriations Bill was passed in both houses of Congress and signed by the President, preventing a government shutdown. This will fund most of the government through September 30, 2015. The Department of Homeland Security was only funded through the end of February to allow the incoming Congress to address the President's Executive Action on deportations. A listing of relevant health and housing program funding levels can be found here. The debate over funding for FY16 (Oct. 1, 2015-Sept. 30, 2016) will begin early

Rabbitt

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next year. A significant issue will be the funding restrictions caused by the sequester and the Budget Control Act. Relief from these restrictions will be needed to achieve any significant increase in housing or service funding.

**Primary care funding cliff:** Health Center advocates unsuccessfully sought legislation to prevent the funding cliff during this Congress. The campaign will now focus on opportunities in the next Congress. President Obama is expected to include a proposal to prevent at least some of the funding reduction in his FY16 Budget Request and advocates hope the House and Senate will also include a proposal in their Budgets. **It will be quite difficult to retain the current funding level so significant advocacy is needed!** Health Centers will need over \$3 billion of funding earmarked for the program outside of the regular appropriations process and conservatives are likely to demand this spending is offset elsewhere in the budget.

**National Housing Trust Fund:** The NHTF was established by a 2008 law directing federal housing finance agencies to allocate a portion of the fees they collect to the NHTF. These allocations were suspended because these agencies (Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac) became insolvent during the foreclosure crisis. The suspension of funds lasted for six years but the Federal Housing Finance Agency recently announced the suspension would be lifted. Read our partner the National Low-Income Housing Coalition's [press release](#).

Efforts to reform Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac have been underway for some time and are likely to intensify in the next Congress. Two bipartisan bills from the current Congress included a funding mechanism for the NHTF that would provide over \$3 billion annually for affordable housing. Another bill abolished the NHTF altogether. The United for Homes campaign aims to ensure the NHTF is included in any potential housing finance legislation and also plans to explore other funding mechanisms such as reforms to the tax code.

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