

MEMO OF MEMBERS

The Weekly Newsletter of the National Low Income Housing Coalition

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NLIHC Mourns the Passing of Housing Icon Cushing N. Dolbeare

It is with great sadness that the National Low Income Housing Coalition must announce the death of Cushing N. Dolbeare, our Founder and Chair Emeritus. Cushing died of cancer on March 17, 2005 at her home. She was 78.

Cushing began the National Low Income Housing Coalition in 1974 when she organized the Ad Hoc Low Income Housing Coalition in response to the Nixon Administration's moratorium on federal housing programs. She served as NLIHC's Executive Director from 1977 to 1984 and again from 1993 to 1994. She remained active with NLIHC as a researcher, policy analyst, and board member until her death.

Cushing was both the conscience and the brains of the affordable housing movement. There is no one else like her. Her passing is a great loss to the nation, but especially to low income people whose well-being was her life's work. Over the years, millions of people have obtained homes they can afford due in no small part to the dedicated perseverance of someone they never met, Cushing Dolbeare.

Plans for a memorial service in Washington, DC in April are underway and will be announced shortly. Condolences to the family can be sent in care of the National Low Income Housing Coalition, 1012 14th St. NW, Suite 610, Washington, DC 20005. The family requests that in lieu of flowers, memorial gifts be made to the Cushing N. Dolbeare Endowment Fund at the National Low Income Housing Coalition.

Please see www.nlihc.org for more on Cushing's life and work.

Capitol Hill Congress Acts on Budget

Both the House and the Senate passed budget resolutions the week of March 14 that will be harmful to low income people. Both resolutions were similar to the resolutions that passed out of the chambers' respective budget committees (see *Memo*, March 11).

The House resolution cuts domestic programs by \$216 billion over the next five years, and sets discretionary spending at the President's request of \$843 billion. The House did increase funding for the community and regional development account, which allocates funding for the Community Development Block Grant

(See *Capitol Hill* on p. 2)

NLIHC Annual Conference, May 2-3
Housing Leadership Award Reception, May 3
See Details on Page 2

POINT OF VIEW

by Sheila Crowley, President

Little did we know when a ballroom full of us gathered last week to hear Cushing Dolbeare speak how precious that morning would be. In just eight days, she would be gone. Those of us who were there are fortunate that we carry with us a lasting image of a woman, though small and frail in body, was strong and confident in her values and her intellect.

Cushing Dolbeare had a vision of America and Americans that was rooted in a profound belief in the possibility of goodness and an unrelenting commitment to making her America the way she thought it ought to be. America ought to be the place where all people enjoy the comforts of home, a home free from fear, harm, and want, and a home that nourishes and protects. Cushing knew that without the assurance of a home, families disintegrate, children fail to thrive, and communities crumble. Cushing knew, and taught all of us, that this vision of a good home for everyone is well within our grasp as a nation, if only we decide to make it so.

It was said more than once that Cushing Dolbeare had forgotten more about housing than the rest of us will ever learn. Her command of the facts was legendary and her recall of the history of federal housing policy was crystal clear. She did not wear the title of icon comfortably, demurring that she was just one among many who worked hard at making housing better for low income people. But there is no else like her.

And then there was her laugh, such an easy laugh, triggered by a wry sense of humor

(See *Point of View* on p.9)



NATIONAL LOW INCOME
HOUSING COALITION

Capitol Hill *(cont'd from p. 1)*

(CDBG) program, by \$1.1 billion. While it is up to appropriators to allocate these additional funds to the CDBG program, language in the budget resolution makes it clear to appropriators that the \$1.1 billion increase is intended for the program. The House, however, did not take any position on the President's proposal to consolidate the CDBG program into the Strengthening American Communities Initiative (SACI) at the Commerce Department. The \$1.1 billion increase was offset by a reduction in spending for other low income programs, including the majority of HUD programs.

Members of the House's Save Our Cities Caucus supported the \$1.1 billion increase to the CDBG budget account. The caucus is made up of 24 Republicans with an interest in urban issues, such as former mayors and city council members, including Representatives Mike Turner (R-OH) and Nancy Johnson (R-CT). Both took the opportunity on the House floor to laud the CDBG program for its effectiveness in revitalizing cities.

The House budget resolution also retained the instructions for \$106 billion in tax cuts, \$45 billion of which would be protected from a filibuster on the Senate floor. And it included language that would make it difficult for an appropriations bill that exceeds its spending allocation to pass. This budget enforcement language would not apply to any omnibus appropriations bill.

Low income people and advocates can claim a victory in the Senate budget resolution. The Senate voted to

remove the proposed \$14 billion cut to the Medicaid program. The amendment was offered by Senator Gordon Smith (R-OR) and passed by a 52-48 vote.

Senator Paul Sarbanes' (D-MD) proposed amendment to restore funding to the CDBG program failed to pass by a 49-51 vote. The amendment received bipartisan support, including support from Senators George Voinovich (R-OH), Lincoln Chafee (R-RI), Norm Coleman (R-MN), and Mike DeWine (R-OH). Senator Sarbanes' amendment would have been offset CDBG funding by closing tax loopholes.

Senator Norm Coleman offered an amendment to increase funding for CDBG, the Community Services Block Grant and the Rural Housing and Economic Development programs, among others, by a total of \$2 billion. Senator Coleman's amendment passed by a vote of 66-31 with strong bi-partisan support. This amendment also includes language in support of keeping CDBG at HUD. Under this amendment, the increase in funding will be offset by across-the-board cuts to other programs.

Low income housing advocates are disappointed that Senator Coleman's amendment to save CDBG is the one that passed. It is a victory for CDBG only at the expense of all other domestic programs. Senator Coleman did not reveal the nature and content of his amendment until just before introduction.

The pay-as-you-go amendment offered by Senators Russ Feingold (D-WI) and Lincoln Chafee (R-RI), which would have required offsets for tax cuts and increases

(See Capitol Hill on p. 3)

NLIHC Annual Conference, May 2-3 Housing Leadership Award Reception, May 3

NLIHC's 2005 Annual Housing Policy Conference and Lobby Day will be held Monday and Tuesday, May 2 and 3, at the Capital Hilton in Washington, DC.

Confirmed plenary speakers are political strategist Donna Brazile and federal budget expert Stan Collender. The conference will feature more than 20 workshops on a wide range of housing and community development topics, including the federal budget, CDBG, the National Housing Trust Fund, GSEs, smart growth, and more.

Brochures have been mailed to all NLIHC members. They are also available online at: www.nlihc.org/conference.pdf. Register online at <https://www.nlihc.org/conference.html> or call 202-662-1530.

The 23rd Annual Housing Leadership Reception will be held on Tuesday, May 3, 2005 from 6:00-8:00 pm at the Washington Court Hotel in Washington, DC.

Honorees this year are Moises Loza, the Executive Director of the Housing Assistance Council since 1981 and long time member of the NLIHC Board of Directors, and the Minneapolis High-Rise Representative Council for their exemplary civic engagement campaign in 2004.

Tickets to the reception must be purchased separately from registration for the conference. Tickets are available online at <https://www.nlihc.org/conference.html> or by calling 202-662-1530.

Capitol Hill *(cont'd from p. 2)*

in mandatory spending, failed on a 50-50 vote. The Senate increased the amount of tax cuts that can be protected from filibuster on the Senate floor from \$70 billion to \$129 billion.

The Senate increased the discretionary spending level from \$843 billion to \$848 billion. This increase is the result of an amendment offered by Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA), and is intended to increase spending for education.

The differences in the House and Senate budget resolutions will have to be reconciled before a final budget resolution is passed. Given the significant differences between the two, compromise will be hard to reach. Work will continue on the two bills when Congress returns from its spring recess.

Appropriation Process Begins

The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Treasury, Housing and Urban Development, the Judiciary, and the District of Columbia held their first 2006 HUD budget hearing on March 17 with HUD Secretary Alphonso Jackson as the only witness.

In his second Hill testimony during March, HUD Secretary Alphonso Jackson defended the Administration's fiscal year 2006 HUD budget request and touted the budget as "compassionate" to those in need. Mr. Jackson boasted of recent homeownership gains, while providing little information to justify the elimination and cuts to other housing programs, including CDBG and the Section 811 housing for people with disabilities program.

Subcommittee appropriators argued that, given the current budget climate, restraint is needed in the HUD budget and that there is a need to evaluate the HUD budget request and HUD programs to assess if there are alternatives to the proposals in the FY06 budget request.

In his opening remarks, Chair Joe Knollenburg (R-MI) asserted that "ineffective and inefficient" programs needed to be "fixed or terminated." He also declared that he was in "full support of reductions [to HUD programs]." Mr. Knollenburg expressed concern for the proposed increases in the Section 8 voucher and homeless programs. Mr. Knollenburg lauded the increases, but contended that the increases were at the expense of other housing programs. Mr. Knollenburg argued that the Section 8 voucher program has been "exempt" from the budget cuts and questioned whether it was "fair" for the program to have such an exemp-

tion. He also questioned if reforms were not made to the program if it could be expected that HUD would continue "exempting the program from budget constraints." "Congress cannot continue to 'cannibalize' other housing programs for the Section 8 program," said Mr. Knollenburg.

With the exception of "reforming" the Section 8 program, much of the focus of the hearing was on the President's proposal to eliminate the CDBG program, under the guise of consolidation with other programs into the Strengthening American Communities Initiative (SACI). Many of the subcommittee members, including Chair Knollenburg, asked Mr. Jackson when they could expect more details about the program. The Secretary deferred to Department of Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez, asserting that the Commerce Department was taking the "lead" on SACI.

Ranking Member John Olver (D-MA) expressed concern over the Secretary's remarks regarding the Commerce Department taking the "lead." Mr. Olver said that the housing component of CDBG would be lost if the program was consolidated into a new initiative at the Commerce Department. The Secretary continued to defend the proposal to move the program to the Commerce Department by asserting that "the program was moved to assist industrial cities and those cities with a greater need."

Representative Anne Northup (R-KY) attempted to blame the CDBG proposed move on the Section 8 program. "If you want programs to stay at HUD we have to do something about Section 8," said Ms. Northup. To address Ms. Northup's and other Members' concerns about the Section 8 program, Secretary Jackson argued that there needed to be "checks and balances" established for the program to combat its growth. The Secretary continued the Administration's mantra that PHAs need "flexibility" to set rents based on the local market.

Members of the Subcommittee also asked questions about cuts to other HUD programs, including Section 811, Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS (HOPWA), and the proposed rescission of HOPE VI funds. The Administration's proposed rescission would take back the \$143 million Congress allocated to the HOPE VI program in FY05; however, the Secretary announced at the hearing that the Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) for the FY05 funding would be released in early April. Ranking Member Olver expressed concern over HUD's plan to move forward with the FY05 NOFA if the Administration has requested Congress to rescind the \$143 million FY05 funds.

(See Capitol Hill on p. 4)

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

The subcommittee plans to continue having HUD hearings throughout the spring and there is hope to begin mark-up of the FY06 appropriations bill in mid-June.

Hearing on the Strengthening America's Communities Initiative

On March 17, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings and Emergency Management held a hearing on the Administration's Strengthening America's Communities Initiative (SACI). SACI is the proposal to consolidate 18 programs, the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) among them, within the Department of Commerce and to cut their combined funding by 35%. Funding for the CDBG program would be reduced by \$1.42 billion (see *Memo*, February 4).

Though the focus of the hearing was SACI's impact on economic development, several witnesses and legislators used the opportunity to also discuss its impact on low income housing. Ranking Member Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) opened her statement by voicing concern over the "enormity" of the cuts. She stated that the reduction in funding to the CDBG program would include not only the \$1.42 billion cut in the Administration's budget request, but an additional loss of \$18 billion in private investments.

David Sampson, Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development, was the lead witness. He said that the President believes the goal of federal economic and community development programs is to "create the conditions for economic growth, robust job opportunities, and livable communities, thereby encouraging a community's improvement and reduction of the need to rely on perpetual federal assistance." SACI's purpose, he said, is to eliminate duplicative and overlapping programs. "Most of these programs lack clear goals or accountability measures, and thus cannot sufficiently demonstrate any measurable impact" he said.

Dr. Sampson said that the Administration will seek to file legislation in April to authorize SACI, and that it is enlisting input from stakeholders through the Secretarial Advisory Committee being created by the Department of Commerce. Subcommittee Chair Bill Shuster (R-PA) questioned the legitimacy of such input considering that the bill will be filed in early April, but the Advisory Committee's report to the department is not due until May 31.

Congressman James Oberstar (D-MN), the Ranking Minority Member of the full Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, stated that the Administration is not, in fact, trying to streamline programs. The SACI proposal, he said, is "...about decimating and eliminating important programs."

"This is a thinly disguised sham," he continued, "and I don't believe a word of it. We're going to say no. This is the wrong initiative at the wrong time."

CDBG Education Efforts Continue

On March 15, the National League of Cities and the National Association of Housing Redevelopment Officials sponsored a joint press conference with Senator Paul Sarbanes (D-MD) and Representatives Chris Shays (R-CT) and Barney Frank (D-MA) to speak out against the President's proposed Strengthening American Communities Initiative (SACI).

The focus of the press conference was on the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), which would be eliminated under the President's SACI proposal. The core message of the press conference was "no cuts, no move" to the CDBG program.

Senator Sarbanes discussed the vast support for the CDBG program in the Senate and explained his proposed amendment to the Senate budget resolution which would have restored funding for the CDBG program, as well as the other seventeen programs that are proposed for elimination (see budget article). Senator Sarbanes also criticized the Commerce Department's attempt to create an advisory committee for the SACI proposal (see *Memo*, March 11), saying that it was a "cavalier" way of doing policy.

Both Senator Sarbanes and Representative Frank criticized the Administration's budget priorities and the biased attacks on low income programs such as CDBG. "You would think they wouldn't do the tax cuts," said Senator Sarbanes. Mr. Frank contended that, usually, programs that are proposed for consolidation or elimination are plagued with stories of abuse. "You don't see the horror stories of abuse [in the CDBG program] – there aren't any," said Mr. Frank.

Mr. Frank also touted the 181 signatories on the bipartisan CDBG support letter, which he cosponsored with Representative Chris Shays (R-CT). The letter was sent to the House Appropriations Committee and it asks for full funding for CDBG and for the program to be kept at HUD. Mr. Shays lauded block grants as the "way to go" to meet local needs, but he criticized the majority

(See Capitol Hill on p. 5)

Capitol Hill *(cont'd from p. 4)*

party for “having a tendency to combine block grants then cut [funding].” Mr. Shays argued for the program to receive an increase or at least be “held harmless.”

Other elected officials at the press conference included the President of the National League of Cities, Mayor Anthony Williams of Washington, DC; the President of U.S. Conference of Mayors, Akron, Ohio Mayor Don Plusquellic; and Council Member Jim Hunt of Clarksburg, West Virginia. There was consensus among the officials that CDBG is an effective program that has helped millions of people. “CDBG affects real people not just the Mayors and Councilpeople,” said Mr. Plusquellic.

House Subcommittee Moves on TANF Bill

The House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Resources passed a welfare reform bill on March 15 that would increase work requirements and reduce the amount of time a person can use vocational education to fulfill “work activity” requirements.

More conservative than the Senate welfare reform bill that passed the Senate Finance Committee the week of March 7 (see *Memo*, March 11), the Personal Responsibility, Work, and Family Promotion Act of 2005, H.R. 240, would require adult recipients to work 40 hours a week instead of the current 30 hours. The bill would also reduce the amount of time, from twelve to three months, that a person can count vocational education and training as a direct work activity.

The bill increases childcare funding by \$1 billion over the next five years. The Senate version would increase childcare funding by \$1.2 billion over the next five years. The Democratic amendments that were offered to increase childcare funding and retain current work requirements failed in subcommittee.

The full Ways and Means Committee plans to mark up the bill in April. In the meantime, the House passed the ninth welfare extension of the current law on March 14. This extension will expire on June 30, 2005.

House Subcommittee Hearing on Rural Development

The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies Subcommittee, Chaired by Henry Bonilla (R-TX), held a hearing on March 17 on the USDA’s Rural Development agency’s FY06 appro-

priations. The Subcommittee heard testimony from Gilbert Gonzalez, Acting Under Secretary for Rural Development (RD). Current Administrators for each Rural Development division were also present, including Administrator Russell T. Davis of Rural Housing Service (RHS).

Mr. Gonzalez provided an overview of the proposed RHS budget for FY06 and emphasized RD and the Bush Administration’s commitment to rural America. Mr. Gonzalez also discussed the proposed reorganization and transfer of RD economic development programs to the Department of Commerce under the Bush Administration’s Strengthening American Communities Initiative (SACI).

Several Subcommittee members challenged the testimony of Mr. Gonzalez and the proposed RD budget. Chairman Bonilla and Representative Tom Latham (R-IA) expressed concern about a possible reduction in RD regional field staff although Mr. Gonzalez stated there are no plans to reduce the number of RD field staff. Representatives Latham, Maurice Hinchey (D-NY), Jo Ann Emerson (R-MO), Allen Boyd (D-FL), Ray LaHood (R-IL), and Sam Farr (D-CA) all expressed concern about shifting RD economic development programs to the Department of Commerce under the SACI proposal.

Representative Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) questioned the lack of funding for new construction in the Section 515 program. The Administration has proposed drastically cutting funding for the Section 515 program from \$99 million in FY05 to \$27 million in FY06. The Section 515 program is used to make direct loans to finance multi-family rental housing for very low and low income people.

Mr. Farr also questioned how RHS was addressing eligibility problems with its programs. Mr. Farr said that high land costs, income requirements, and program area eligibility requirements make it difficult for high cost rural areas to utilize RHS programs. Mr. Davis said that RHS is working with the Government Accountability Office and USDA’s Economic Research Service on ways to provide a more finely tuned definition of rural. Mr. Farr also encouraged RD to advocate more for rural America and for RD to disagree with Bush Administration budget proposals.

We thank the Housing Assistance Council for submitting this article.

(See Capitol Hill on p. 6)

Capitol Hill *(cont'd from p. 5)* New Legislation

On March 15, Representative Robert Ney (R-OH) introduced H.R. 1295 to protect consumers against unfair and deceptive practices in connection with higher cost mortgage transactions, to strengthen the civil remedies available to consumers under existing law, to provide for certain uniform lending standards, to improve housing counseling, to improve mortgage servicing, to enhance appraisal standards and oversight, to establish licensing and minimum standards for mortgage brokers, and for other purposes. The bill was referred to the House Committee on Financial Services.

On March 15, Representative Barbara Lee (D-CA) introduced H.R. 1309 to protect innocent elderly and disabled tenants in public housing and housing assisted under the rental assistance program under Section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 from eviction by reason of criminal activity. The bill was referred to the House Committee on Financial Services.

On March 17, Representative Janice D. Schakowsky (D-IL) introduced H.R. 1441 to require all newly constructed, federally assisted, single-family houses and town houses to meet minimum standards of visitability for persons with disabilities. The bill was referred to the House Committee on Financial Services.

On March 17, Senator Chuck Grassley (R-IA) introduced S. 667 to reauthorize and improve the program of block grants to States for temporary assistance for needy families, improve access to quality child care, and for other purposes. The bill has been placed on the Senate legislative Calendar under General Orders (Calendar No. 60).

Bills At a Glance

Current information on legislation being tracked by NLIHC is available through NLIHC's legislative action center, at capwiz.com/nlihc/issues/bills/.

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National Housing Trust Fund

NHTF Campaign Passes 5,400 Endorsers

This past week, the National Housing Trust Fund Campaign Endorser list grew to over 5,400 Endorsers. Some of the most recent endorsers include the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NEAHCY), and state level organizations such as the Northwest Side Community Development Corporation from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and the Better Future Self Help Center from Washington, NJ, along with many others from across the country. The growing number of endorsers continues the strong push the Campaign has made over the past few years and ensures that the message is heard in every Congressional district. Organizations, elected officials, businesses, banks, and others can find more information and endorse online at www.nhtf.org.

From the Field

Grassroots Organizing and Advocacy for Full HUD Funding

There has been a nationwide outpouring of citizen action calling on Congress to vote for a federal budget that will protect and provide sufficient funding for essential housing, community and economic development, health, human services and education programs. NLIHC has received reports from the field and Congressional staff of a wave of phone calls, emails, and faxes flooding Senators and House offices. individuals.

We have also received reports from our State Coalition affiliates of intensive efforts to educate and mobilize the public to speak out for affordable housing, some of which are highlighted here. We will feature efforts in other states and regions in the weeks to come.

The **Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition** has organized several press events to raise public awareness and concern about threatened federal budget cuts. On February 22, 2005, Senator Jim Jeffords spoke out in support of full funding for HUD at an event organized by the Vermont Coalition in connection with the release of their Housing and Wages report. On March 8,

(See Field on p. 7)

Field *(Cont. from p.6)*

2005 Erhard Mahnke of the Coalition spoke on behalf of the coalition at a press event held by the Vermont Coalition Against Federal Budget Cuts. Groups speaking at the event included the VT Campaign to End Childhood Hunger, Central Vermont Community Action, and the Children's Forum.

In Illinois, the **Statewide Housing Action Coalition** (SHAC) is working with an ad hoc coalition to advocate for a decent federal budget. Bob Palmer, SHAC Housing Policy Specialist, shared a coalition letter that states "(we have) come together because our respective beliefs call us to work for a society that meets all basic human needs, including housing." In addition to SHAC, coalition members include Interfaith Open Communities, the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs, and the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law.

Liz Hersh, Executive Director of the **Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania** reports that the Alliance together with faith based, civic and community leaders throughout the state organized five media events this week to send an "SOS" to Senators Specter and Santorum. The events in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Erie, Harrisburg and the Poconos were featured Monday through Thursday on six television stations and at least four radio stations, and in three newspapers: the *Inquirer*, *Pocono Record* and *Patriot News*. These media events followed up other efforts by local affiliates in Carlisle, Lancaster and Allentown to alert the media to the devastating local impact of losing federal dollars as proposed by the administration.

In addition, the Alliance convened seven regional forums attended by local coalition members, bankers, Realtors, builders, housing authorities, consumers and providers of affordable homes. These forums reached some 350 people in more than half of the state's 67 counties to let people know about the proposed federal budget, state policy and give them new social marketing tools to bring attention to the community value of the services they provide.

Advocates in Minnesota are planning a Housing Forum for members of their Congressional delegation on Monday, March 28 while their senators and representatives are home on spring break, reports Joanna Dornfeld, Communications and Media Specialist for **HousingMinnesota**. Ms. Dornfeld said that "We are working with mayors from across the state to invite members of Congress to discuss how the President's proposed budget will severely harm Minnesotans. Advocates are calling on members to fully fund all housing programs."

Chip Halbach, **Minnesota Housing Partnership** executive director, published a commentary in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* on February 24 about how the President's proposed budget will impact Minnesotans. The proposed cuts to CDBG and proposed cuts by Governor Tim Pawlenty to a similar state program will mean a significant lack of funds in Minnesota to produce and preserve affordable housing.

Martha Yeager, of **American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)** and the **New Hampshire Housing Forum**, said that the groups have been using a combination of the NLIHC Calls to Action on the budget and the AFSC SOS (Save Our Services) Campaign alerts. AFSC has provided a toll-free line for use by a broad coalition of human needs organizations to use for their national grass roots advocacy efforts. Ms. Yeager said they are running a post card campaign up through the Appropriations process which will unfold this Spring. The AFSC SOS postcard and action kit can be found at www.saveourservices.org.

Many state, regional and local housing organizations and their allies are planning visits and special events with their senators and representatives during the upcoming Congressional recess. Topics will include the House-Senate conference committee deliberations on the FY06 federal budget and the funding allocations that the appropriations committees will receive to fund HUD and other agencies.

In addition to these advocacy activities, NLIHC staff has also been working with State Coalitions to generate media coverage, opinion page articles and editorials in the press. We encourage you to contact Katie Fisher, Media Associate (katie@nlihc.org), for assistance on media coverage and Craig Stevens, State Coalitions Director (craig@nlihc.org), for assistance on organizing and advocacy in the field. In addition, we ask that you can keep us informed about your field and media activities by emailing us reports on your activities, events and media work.

Resources

Squatters in Vacant Public Housing

The Urban Institute has released “De Facto Shelters: Homeless Living in Vacant Public Housing Units,” a report on homeless people squatting illegally in Chicago’s Ida B. Wells development, currently vacant and slated for demolition and redevelopment. Interviewers conducted a census of squatters in March 2003, counting 388 people (294 adults and 94 children), and then conducted in-depth interviews with 32 of them, as well as administrative interviews with officials in the City of Chicago and the Chicago Housing Authority.

About two-thirds of those interviewed lived in vacant units, with smaller numbers living in hallways or other areas in the development. More than a quarter have lived in the project for over a year, and more than half say they sleep in the project seven nights a week. There were numerous reasons why these people became homeless, the two most common being that they had been forced out of housing that had been torn down, and that they could not afford rent.

Because squatters are occupying the units illegally, they do not have a legal right to relocation, nor the right to return to redeveloped developments. Additionally, authors note that a family staying in a vacant unit has different needs than a substance abuser or ex-offender. They recommend creating targeted services aimed at helping these people and having shelters track intake to see if any future increases in numbers can be traced to the demolition of these projects.

The report is available at: www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411144_defacto_shelters.pdf.

Examining the Efficacy of Mobility Assistance

“Moving to Better Neighborhoods with Mobility Counseling” is an issue brief in the Urban Institute’s “Metropolitan Housing and Communities” series. It examines four years of data (from 2001 to 2004) from the Housing Opportunity Program (HOP) in Chicago in order to determine the effectiveness of providing mobility assistance to voucher-holding families.

The authors use descriptive and multivariate techniques to answer three questions: whether enrollment in the HOP program increases the chances of a household moving to a low-poverty – or ‘opportunity’ – neighborhood; whether households make incremental

moves to lower-poverty neighborhoods while participating in the program; and whether there are other factors that affect the probability of a household moving to an opportunity neighborhood.

The authors found that households receiving mobility assistance were more likely to move to an opportunity neighborhood than those not receiving such assistance, although among households that move more than once, households receiving mobility assistance were more likely to move back to high-poverty neighborhoods. While this may point to difficulties these families face in adjusting to their new neighborhoods, the authors also point out that shifting poverty-rates for neighborhoods mean that some neighborhoods designated as low-poverty areas using 1990 Census data may no longer qualify as opportunity neighborhoods using updated 2000 Census figures.

The authors also found that the demographics of voucher households play a role in the likelihood of them moving to opportunity neighborhoods. After controlling for other household characteristics, enrollment in HOP programs has a strong positive effect for moving to low-poverty neighborhoods. Additionally, higher-income households with wage income are more likely to move to these neighborhoods, while vulnerable households, those with large families, black households, and public housing relocates are less likely to move to low-poverty neighborhoods.

The report is available at: www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/311146_Roof_8.pdf.

Fact of the Week

Reasons for Becoming Homeless

Building Torn Down	20%
Could Not Afford Rent	18%
Evictions	12%
Lost Job	12%
Problems with Drug Addiction	8%
Returning from Prison	4%

Survey of homeless people squatting illegally in the Ida B. Wells Housing Project, Chicago. From “De Facto Shelters: Homeless Living in Vacant Public Housing Units”: www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411144_defacto_shelters.pdf

NLIHC News

New NLIHC Staff

NLIHC is pleased to announce that Diane Yentel has joined the staff as a Housing Policy Analyst. Diane comes to us from the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless where she was a Housing Policy Coordinator. Diane was a Peace Corps volunteer in Zambia, where she did community development work, and holds a Masters in Social Work from the University of Texas at Austin and a Bachelor of Arts from the State University of New York at Stony Brook. You can reach her at diane@nlihc.org and via extension 230.

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

and making even the most dreadful news less dreadful. Maybe it was not always so, but in the time I knew Cushing well, nothing fazed her. The worst you would get if she was annoyed was "oh, for heaven's sake." She always had an idea about how to get past or at least around any obstacle, with the infamous lead-in "I have a suggestion."

Above all, Cushing was known for her integrity. As she said last week at her final speech, she "always wanted her facts to be right, even if I didn't want them to be true." Those of us who are affiliated with the National Low Income Housing Coalition know that she left us the invaluable legacy of a huge reservoir of good will and high regard among policy makers. We will use it wisely and well. And before too long, we will achieve Cushing's vision of a good home for everyone.

NLIHC Staff

Matt Achhammer, Field Organizer, x229
 Bonnie Caldwell, Senior Legislative Director, x242
 Linda Couch, Deputy Director, x228
 Sheila Crowley, President, x224
 Jennifer Fabbri, Legislative Intern, x243
 Katie Fisher, Media Coordinator/
 Voterization Project Manager, x222
 Melissa Higuchi, Membership Associate, x227
 Rachel Lynn, Outreach Intern, x244
 Andrea Mayo, Voterization Project Intern, x214
 Kheng Mei Tan, Outreach and
 Organizing Intern, x243
 Khara Norris,
 Executive Assistant, x224
 Danilo Pelletiere, Research Director, x237
 Winton Pitcoff, Publications Manager
 Michelle Stafford, Research Intern, x239
 Michelle Goodwin Thompson, Office Manager, x234
 Mark Treskon, Research Analyst, x245
 Carol Vance, Receptionist/Office Assistant, x221
 Catherine Vu, Research Intern, x250
 Kim Willis, Policy Analyst, x314
 Diane Yentel, Housing Policy Analyst, x230

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.



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.

National Low Income Housing Coalition
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