



national policy and advocacy council on homelessness

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**On 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of McKinney-Vento Act, Congress Must Move Boldly To Prevent and End Homelessness**

Sunday, July 22 will mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. This landmark legislation provided the first federal funding directly targeted to people experiencing homelessness. Over the past 20 years, McKinney-Vento Act programs have prevented and ended homelessness for millions of American children, youth, families, and single adults – thanks to the effort of those men and women, the hard work and dedication displayed by the dedicated staff and volunteers of homeless service providers, and the financial support provided by Congress, successive administrations, state and local governments, the faith community, and the private sector.

NPACH approaches this 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary with sadness. Like many others, we had hoped that homelessness would no longer exist 20 years after McKinney-Vento became law. But we have always understood that in 1987, McKinney-Vento was intended to be a first step in ending homelessness, not the only step. Unfortunately, this nation has missed many opportunities to take subsequent steps, and in many cases we have even moved backwards.

HUD homeless assistance grants alone will never end homelessness, particularly when coupled with what we have seen over the past 20 years - sharp cuts in federal affordable housing programs, welfare “reform” without meaningful education and training programs, deinstitutionalization without housing, the challenges faced by ex-offenders whose inability to get jobs or housing due to their criminal records continues to punish them long after their release date, and the struggles of children and youth with a child welfare system that all too often leaves them on their own at age 18. However, we can end homelessness if we require this country’s housing, social services, and criminal justice systems to do nothing less.

The 110<sup>th</sup> Congress will not end homelessness, but it can make significant progress on an action agenda that will both prevent and decrease it. On this 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the McKinney-Vento Act, and in the hope that we will not need to return here in another 20 years, we call on Congress to pass and the President to sign the following legislation.

- HR 840 – the HEARTH Act, which would refocus HUD’s homeless assistance programs to better serve the full range of homeless populations in this country.
- A National Housing Trust Fund (HR 2895), to preserve and create 1.5 million units of affordable housing.
- The Second Chance Act (HR 1593 and S. 1060), to prevent homelessness by supporting ex-offenders who leave our prisons and jails without the help they need to find housing, jobs, and health care.
- The Gulf Coast Housing Recovery Act (HR 1227 and S. 1668), to help ensure that everyone made homeless by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita has a chance to live in safe, decent, affordable housing.
- Fiscal year 2008 appropriations legislation that boosts McKinney-Vento funding and contains new housing resources for homeless veterans and homeless families with children in the child welfare system.
- Meaningful child welfare reform, that gives social workers the flexibility they need to provide families with the housing assistance that would enable them in many cases to reunify – which would both benefit children and save money.

Today, let us commit our time, energy, and resources to the goal of ending homelessness. We know what it will take to do it; let us pledge to the 3 million people – children, youth, families, and single adults – who will be homeless at some point during this year that we will not rest until our task is complete.