

The NPACH Report (July 2008)

Greetings from Washington. NPACH continues to be active in support of key legislation to help prevent and end homelessness. But we're dependent on you – advocates, service providers, and state or local government officials across the country, to hold Congress, the administration, and other homeless advocates accountable to the only goal that matters – the goal of ending homelessness. Only with your help can we get there.

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From Capitol Hill:

HUD McKinney-Vento Reauthorization

The House continues to work on a proposed manager's amendment to HR 840 – the HEARTH Act – the HUD McKinney-Vento reauthorization legislation supported by NPACH. The key unresolved issue is the HUD definition of homelessness.

NPACH and a broad coalition of homeless, housing, education, and children's groups are supporting a closer alignment between federal definitions of homelessness. In one of many attempts at addressing concerns and reaching a compromise, NPACH and other coalition members have proposed including in the HUD definition children and their families who have been verified as homeless by other federal programs – the U.S. Department of Education's Education of Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Runaway and Homeless Youth, Head Start, and Individuals With Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) programs. Regrettably, other organizations, including the National Alliance to End Homelessness and the Corporation for Supportive Housing, are strongly opposing this common sense change, **arguing that these children, youth, and families are not truly homeless and therefore not as vulnerable** as people covered under the current HUD definition of homelessness. As a result, the Financial Services Committee is at an impasse and a mark up of HR 840 has been postponed.

[Click here](#) to read our new position paper on why children and youth identified as homeless by other federal programs must be considered homeless by HUD.

[Click here](#) for stories of children and families who lost their housing due to the foreclosure crisis and are considered homeless by the U.S. Department of Education but not by HUD. Under NPACH's proposed compromise, these children and their families would be considered homeless.

[Click here](#) for a chart comparing proposed House definitions of homelessness.

To help turn the tide, please contact House Financial Services Committee Chairman Barney Frank and Housing Subcommittee Chairwoman Maxine Waters. If you work or live in any of the districts of the Housing Subcommittee, please contact those members. A list of members is available here: <http://financialservices.house.gov/subassignments.html>. Tell House members that if a child, youth, or family is considered homeless by Ed or HHS, HUD should also consider them homeless.

Foreclosure Relief / National Housing Trust Fund

The Senate is currently considering broad legislation to respond to the foreclosure crisis that is damaging communities and resulting in increased homelessness. Both the House and Senate bills are titled H.R. 3221, due to a procedural quirk. But the bills are different. The two pieces of legislation can be found by going to <http://thomas.loc.gov> and entering "HR 3221."

Both bills have troubling elements – large tax breaks for homebuilders and other groups, along with funds to assist banks and mortgage lenders who made unwise and often deceptive loans to consumers who were clearly not financially qualified to purchase homes. However, there are also good provisions which would assist low income people.

First, the legislation includes the creation of a national housing trust fund – a goal that NPACH staff have worked for since well before the organization was founded. Unfortunately, Senators from both parties have agreed to divert a significant portion of the Trust Fund's resources for the next three years to pay for the foreclosure relief plan. NPACH opposes this diversion of money from low income Americans in need of new affordable housing units to a program designed to benefit other people of modest means who are losing their homes to foreclosure. Instead, the Senate should have paid for foreclosure relief by reducing the bill's tax breaks for homebuilders and other business groups.

The Senate's position is particularly problematic in light of the House's proposal to dedicate the first year of trust fund money to rebuilding of affordable housing on the Gulf coast. We urge the Senate to adopt this position, and agree to pay for the foreclosure plan through other revenue sources, as this legislation moves towards a conference committee. The Gulf coast cannot afford to lose this money.

Both the House and Senate foreclosure bills also contain extra Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to help communities buy blighted properties, rehabilitate them, and use them as affordable housing for low and moderate income people. In that capacity, properties could potentially be used as permanent housing for homeless persons. The House bill would provide \$15 million – the Senate bill contains a request for only \$4 million. Unfortunately, the White House has declared that the President would veto any bill containing extra CDBG. And in an equally troubling step, House and Senate Democrats appear likely to remove this proposed funding from the bill, in order to avoid the threatened veto.

Gulf Coast Housing Resources

In late June, the House considered supplemental appropriations legislation to fund the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as other domestic priorities. As previously passed in the Senate, the legislation contained \$146 million in housing funds to help rebuild the Gulf Coast after hurricanes Katrina and Rita - \$76 million dollars in supportive housing vouchers for Louisiana, as well as \$20 million in project based Section 8 vouchers for Mississippi and \$50 million in CDBG meant to help rebuild Alabama communities.

Unfortunately, advocates were blind-sided when the House, at the last minute, passed the funding for Louisiana but stripped the monies intended for Mississippi and Alabama. The terrible decision to pit needy states against one another ultimately was made by congressional staff, but it was made easier by the singular focus from many national groups, including the National Alliance to End Homelessness, on designating supportive housing vouchers for Louisiana. As long as national homeless advocates cannot work for the common good and advocate for a broad range of interventions to help end homelessness on the entire Gulf Coast and across the country, Congress will continue to take advantage of opportunities to divide our community.

Senate staff have told NPACH that soon after the July 4 recess the Senate will vote on the House passed bill as is, thus preventing any opportunity to restore the Mississippi and Alabama funds. However, until the final legislation passes, NPACH will look for a way to have these funds included in the bill.

Take action by calling House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Majority Leader Steny Hoyer. Tell their staff that the House legislation should have included the full \$146 million in Gulf Coast housing funds, and insist that the \$70 million for Mississippi and Alabama be included in future legislation this year. Also call your U.S. Senators and ask them to preserve their support for these critical Gulf Coast funds for Mississippi and Alabama. Contact information for the House and Senate can be found at www.house.gov and www.senate.gov respectively.

NPACH Welcomes New Board Members

NPACH is pleased to announce its new Board of Directors, including four new members who bring extensive experience on the issue of homelessness.

The new board members are: **Casey Trupin**, staff attorney at Columbia Legal Services in Seattle and Chairman of the American Bar Association's Commission on Homelessness & Poverty; **Amy Weintraub**, Executive Director of the Covenant House of West Virginia; **Ruth White**, Executive Director, National Center for Housing and Child Welfare - and one of the nation's leading experts on the nexus between housing policy and child welfare; and **Joe Willard**, Vice President of Policy for People's Emergency Center (PEC) in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

At the board meeting, Barbara Duffield, Will Forte, and Robyn Frost were re-elected and Brad Paul, NPACH co-founder and former Executive Director, was named new board Chair. Completing her time on the board was Amy Knudsen, formerly of the Iowa Coalition on Housing and Homelessness.

"We are delighted to have Casey, Amy, Ruthie, and Joe on our board," said NPACH Executive Director Jeremy Rosen. "They each bring NPACH a tremendous amount of experience in direct service advocacy and policy work on the issues of affordable housing and homelessness." Board president Brad Paul agreed, observing that "We are extremely pleased to welcome such talented new members to the NPACH team. Each comes to the board with a reality-based perspective based on work in the field and impressive institutional affiliations. They continue to strengthen the NPACH tradition of providing an alternative voice to the business as usual practices defining so much homeless and housing advocacy. "

NPACH is sad to report the passing of one of its founding board members, Dr. Mary Joyce. Mary was the Gianneschi Professor of Nonprofit Marketing at California State University, Fullerton, and as a board member dedicated herself to engaging her students and community around the issues of poverty and homelessness. "Mary was a long-time friend and fighter. She always encouraged NPACH to embrace its unique role of speaking truth to power," said board chair Brad Paul. "She had an undeniable charisma and was a great source of inspiration in both her personal and professional life." In addition to her work for NPACH, Mary served on the board of Goodwill Industries of Orange County, and the Council on Aging. Dr. Joyce's considerable research was dedicated to understanding the effects of aging on memory and physical health, psychological gender and women's health, social entrepreneurship & capital, and quality-of-life issues.

For more information about NPACH board members, visit our website http://npach.org/basics/2008/03/board_of_directors.html

Policy Update:

Veterans Housing

On June 24, the House Financial Services Committee approved H.R. 3329, the Homes for Heroes Act. NPACH strongly supports this legislation. The bill would do several important things. First, it would create a new HUD program to provide permanent housing for low income and homeless veterans, modeled on the HUD 202 Senior Housing program. Next it would authorize 20,000 Section 8 vouchers under the HUD-VASH (HUD VA Supportive Housing) initiative, to provide housing and services to disabled homeless veterans. Currently, the program is only authorized to provide 2,500 vouchers, although just under 10,000 new vouchers are being issued this year, and we hope to see 10,000 more new vouchers next year.

We are hopeful that the full House will approve Homes for Heroes in early July. Senate consideration of the bill (S. 1060) is moving more slowly. We are hoping to work with the bill's lead sponsor, Senator Barack Obama, to push for a hearing in the Senate Banking Committee this summer or fall. Such a hearing could lay the groundwork for swift consideration of the legislation in 2009.

Click here to read the Homes for Heroes Act <http://thomas.loc.gov>

Beyond the Beltway: News & Updates

Closure of Charity Hospital in New Orleans

The National Economic and Social Rights Initiative (NESRI) recently released a report on the human right to health in post Katrina New Orleans, entitled: *Betraying an American Tradition: The Killing of Charity Hospital*. In September 2005, officials announced the closure of Charity Hospital which had served a mostly African-American population and housed the city's prominent substance abuse unit and the only hospital-based psychiatric unit. Residents now rely on University Hospital, a facility that has one fourth of the capacity of Charity Hospital.

The full report can be found here. http://www.nesri.org/Killing_Charity_Hospital

Columbia, South Carolina Reports Homeless Students on the Rise

An article from *The State* newspaper reports that the number of homeless students attending Columbia,

South Carolina schools has increased by four percent since 2005 based on numbers provided by the State Department of Education. A children's program director at a transitional housing program for homeless families in Columbia, Nikkiya Brooks, states that the students are coming from working-parent homes. Districts in Columbia that have seen the most significant increase have put Federal funds to use by providing tutors to the shelters to give students extra academic help and using funds to train school staffers on how to identify homeless students and provide services for them.

The full article is available [here](http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_action=list&p_topdoc=31) (by subscription only). http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_action=list&p_topdoc=31

Low Income Renters Feel Foreclosure Burn

Medill Reports 7/3/2008

by David Handelman

Washington

As the mortgage foreclosure crisis ripples through the economy, some experts say it's increasingly difficult for low income renters forced out of foreclosed apartment buildings to find other affordable places to live. If the situation continues to worsen, it could lead to an increase in homelessness, according to urban housing experts. Jeremy Rosen, executive director of the National Policy and Advocacy Council on Homelessness, thinks the effect of foreclosures on low income renters has been underreported. "The foreclosure crisis is hitting two groups," Rosen said. "The owners of houses and buildings, and the renters that are occupying them."

Continue Reading the Story Here: Story URL:

<http://news.medill.northwestern.edu/washington/news.aspx?id=94571>

Mozambicans Displaced By Floods Need Durable Solutions, Says UN Expert

An independent United Nations human rights expert has called for greater efforts to provide those displaced by floods in Mozambique with adequate housing and other services so they can start to rebuild their lives. The Southern African nation is affected by recurrent floods, cyclones and droughts. At least eight people were killed as a result of Cyclone Jokwe, which struck the Mozambican coast on 8 March with winds of up to 200 kilometers per hour, leaving tens of thousands of people homeless. Relocation of those living in disaster-prone areas to safe areas can increase the security of populations, but should only be resorted to, if there are no other and less intrusive solutions and if it is sustainable," Walter Kaelin, the Secretary-General's Representative on the human rights of internally displaced persons, said following his visit to the country. "This is crucial for the protection of the human rights of the persons displaced by the disasters," he added.

Read the story. <http://allafrica.com/stories/200807011118.html>

NPACH Needs Your Support

NPACH is leading the charge for a federal definition of homelessness that reflects reality in communities across the country. We're also fighting to keep Congress focused on the housing needs of the entire Gulf Coast. Our work holds inside the Beltway policymakers and advocates accountable to people working to end homelessness across the country – in cities, suburbs, and rural communities.

Because we value your participation, we don't charge membership fees. But while we operate efficiently, we can't do our work without your financial support! If you believe in our work, please make a donation today. Together, we can move this country towards reality-based solutions to end homelessness.

Both individual and organizational donations may be made through our secure website, at:
<https://secure.groundspring.org/dn/index.php?aid=4232>.

Donations may also be mailed to NPACH's Washington, D.C. office, located at:

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