

# The E-Newsletter of the National AIDS Housing Coalition

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## The National AIDS Housing Coalition

727 15th Street NW, 6th Flr

Washington, DC 20005

p. 202.347.0333

f. 202.347.3411

[nahc@nationalaidshousing.org](mailto:nahc@nationalaidshousing.org)

[www.nationalaidshousing.org](http://www.nationalaidshousing.org)

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## Deadline Extended for Letter Requesting HOPWA Increase

### Call Your Representative's Office and Ask He or She to Sign On!

On Monday, March 26, Reps. Nadler (8th NY), Crowley (7th NY), and Chris Murphy (5th CT) released a "[Dear Colleague](#)" letter requesting that their fellow House Members sign a programmatic request letter to Appropriators asking for a funding increase for HOPWA. This [HOPWA request letter](#) mirrors NAHC's FY08 recommendation for the program: \$454 million (read more in the "FY08 HOPWA Need Paper" article below).

NAHC requested that HIV/AIDS housing advocates from around the country call their Representatives' offices and ask that they sign on to this letter. The original due date for sign-ons was tomorrow, Wednesday, March 28, but, **this deadline has been extended to next week!**

If you have not already called your Member to ask that he or she sign on, please do so right away. [Click here](#) to visit our web page on the letter to find instructions and a list of current signers.

## FY2008 HOPWA Need Paper Released NAHC Recommends \$454 M. for HOPWA in FY08

Every year the National AIDS Housing Coalition prepares a "need paper" which serves as our main advocacy tool when talking about the HOPWA program to Congress and the Administration. This paper announces our request for the next fiscal year and makes a case for an increase based on need around the country and recent research connecting housing to positive health outcomes for people living with HIV/AIDS.

This year, NAHC is recommending \$454 million for HOPWA in FY2008. The need paper explains that, "this increase will reduce waiting lists for HOPWA housing; assist communities in developing new housing for poor individuals with HIV/AIDS and their families; provide rental assistance; establish strategic housing plans; help the thousands of low-income people receiving assistance through the recently reauthorized Ryan White CARE Act get the housing assistance vital to the success of their medical treatments; and make a minimal level of supportive services available to keep people in their housing and fill gaps in comprehensive care."

The paper also serves as a one-stop resource for providers and advocates detailing the recent years' funding levels, the breakdown of HOPWA spending, and other facts about housing need in the U.S., for example:

- Seventy percent of HOPWA funding goes directly to housing assistance and placement with the remainder used for vital related support services and administration.
- An American worker must make \$16.21 an hour to afford a two bedroom apartment for his or her family.
- In 2006, over 80% of households assisted through the HOPWA program were able to achieve maximum housing stability.

Download the [FY08 HOPWA Need Paper](#) for more information on why an increase in HOPWA funding is crucial.

## Senators to Send Letter Requesting Funding Increase for HOPWA

**Letter Will Ask for \$168 Million More in FY08**

Wish your community had more HOPWA funds to finally reduce your waiting list and keep people with HIV/AIDS out of homelessness? So do some prominent HIV/AIDS housing advocates in the Senate.

Senators Durbin (D-IL) and Smith (R-OR) are once again sponsoring a letter to Senate Appropriators requesting an increase in HOPWA funding. The Senators will be circulating a "Dear Colleague" letter to other Members requesting that they sign on to this important letter which will ask for an increase of \$168 million for the program in FY2008. The President requested \$300 million for HOPWA in his 2008 budget; but, these Senators contend that \$454 million (NAHC's recommendation) would bring the program to a more realistic level for serving more of the thousands of individuals with HIV/AIDS who need housing assistance.

Last year, 35 Senators signed on to an appropriations letter (also sponsored by Senators Durbin and Smith) requesting an increase for HOPWA. [Click here](#) to view the list of signers for the FY07 letter.

We're hoping for even greater support this year. NAHC will be issuing a call to action as soon as the final letter is released asking you to call your Senators to request that they sign on. Watch for this important notice coming soon!

## NAHC Hosts Congressional Staff Briefing

### Senate & House Staffers Learn More About HOPWA at March 16 Event



The importance of stable housing for people with HIV/AIDS and the need to expand resources for AIDS housing programs were the topics at NAHC's recent congressional staff briefing. The event took place on March 16th in the Rayburn House Office Building. The briefing was sponsored by long-time

HOPWA and HIV/AIDS housing supporter, Rep. Jerrold Nadler from New York's eighth district and included lunch provided by The AIDS Institute.

Following a video that included testimonials from HOPWA beneficiaries from Michigan, Louisville, Honolulu, New York City and Mississippi, two AIDS housing consumers spoke about their experience with HOPWA. The speakers gave stirring presentations that convincingly affirmed the importance of HOPWA assistance to stabilizing their lives and, thus, their ability to manage their illness. Members of the NAHC board were available to respond to questions from the audience. The briefing concluded with a presentation on the cost savings and cost effectiveness of providing AIDS housing, with highlights from research presented at the Second National Housing and HIV/AIDS [Research Summit](#) in October 2006.

## Katrina Housing Relief Passes the House

### Bill Approved by House on March 21

H.R. 1227, the Gulf Coast Hurricane Recovery Act of 2007, co-sponsored by Rep. Barney Frank (D-4th MA) and Rep. Maxine Waters (D-35th CA), chairs of the House Financial Services Committee and its Housing and Community Opportunity Subcommittee, respectively, was adopted by the House on March 21 by a vote of 302 to 125. The measure contains a number of provisions to address the long-standing dire consequences of Katrina for low income residents receiving federal housing assistance prior to the disaster. For an overview of the legislation, prepared by the National Low Income Housing Coalition, [click here](#).

A hallmark of the bill was a successful amendment by Rep. Al Green (D-9th TX), adopted 242-184, to extend the FEMA voucher program through December 2007. Thirty seven thousand households now receive FEMA rental assistance, with an additional 90,000 in FEMA trailers. When the FEMA vouchers expire, people remaining in the FEMA rental assistance program will be transferred to HUD's Section 8 voucher program. Eligible families living in FEMA trailers would be provided the option to receive a Section 8 voucher. The measure also requires a GAO (Government Accountability Office) study by June 1 of the number of

households wrongfully terminated from disaster housing programs as well as an assessment of the number eligible for Section 8 housing choice vouchers.

The measure will now be referred to the Senate Banking Committee's Subcommittee on Housing, Transportation and Community Development.

## **GSE Reform Legislation Introduced**

### **Language Includes an Affordable Housing Fund**

On March 9, 2007, Representative Barney Frank (D-4<sup>th</sup> MA), Chair of the House Financial Services Committee, introduced (H.R. 1427), legislation to reform the Government-sponsored enterprises (GSEs), Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. The bill is cosponsored by Rep. Baker (R-6<sup>th</sup> LA), Rep. Maloney (D-14<sup>th</sup> NY), Rep. Miller (R-42<sup>nd</sup> CA), and Rep. Watt (D-12<sup>th</sup> NC). Advocates were heartened by the inclusion of language establishing an [Affordable Housing Fund](#) (AHF) which uses funds from the GSEs in amounts based on their portfolio holdings to produce and rehabilitate housing affordable to extremely low- and very low-income families.

If enacted, all money allocated during the first year of the fund would be distributed to Louisiana and Mississippi (75/25 split) for affordable housing activities to assist in the recovery from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. In following years, the funds would be distributed by formula to states. The language mandates that at least 10% of funds must be used for low-income homeownership activities. It is estimated that the fund would result in approximately \$500 million per year for production, preservation, and rehabilitation.

Advocates are hoping that the AHF will be a first step toward the establishment of a [National Housing Trust Fund](#) which would be used to produce, preserve or rehabilitate 1.5 million units of affordable housing over ten years. A Trust Fund bill is expected to be introduced soon, also by Chairman Frank. This Trust Fund would be tied to a dedicated source of funding, yet to be determined, that would generate a much larger amount of money than the AHF. It is expected that AHF dollars would eventually become one of the sources of income funneled into this larger account.

Curious about the lack of units affordable to low income people in your area? The National Low Income Housing Coalition has created district-specific fact sheets which show the absolute deficit in the in the number of units affordable and available to extremely low-income families. They also list the housing wage for your district (the amount that an American worker must make per hour to afford a two bedroom apartment for his or her family). These fact sheets make a great tool for convincing local, state, and federal policy makers about the need for more affordable housing. [Click here](#) to access this fantastic resource.

## **Second Chance Act Scheduled to Clear House Committee**

### **Crime Subcommittee Marking Up the Bill Today**

On March 21, H.R. 1593, The Second Chance Act of 2007 was introduced by Rep. Danny Davis (D-7<sup>th</sup> IL) and Chris Cannon (R-3<sup>rd</sup> UT) along with 13 original co-sponsors. The bill takes a comprehensive approach to addressing the needs of people returning to communities from prisons and jails by authorizing grants to support state and local reentry initiatives focused on employment, housing, substance abuse and mental health treatment, and children and family services. Since research demonstrates that the incidence of confirmed AIDS cases has grown to be five times higher in prison than in the general population and incidences of HIV are estimated to be between 10 and 14 times higher, this legislation holds particular importance for people with HIV/AIDS and their families. (For more information about reentry and HIV/AIDS, visit AIDS Housing of Washington's reentry page by [clicking here](#).) The legislation builds on work done in the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress under the leadership of the Open Society Institute and a broad-based coalition of criminal justice, civil rights, human services and other groups.

The House Crime Subcommittee marks up the bill today, Tuesday, March 27, and the full Judiciary Committee is scheduled to report the measure to the full House on Wednesday, March 28. It is expected that a version of the bill will be introduced in the Senate shortly and move quickly through the Senate Judiciary Committee.