The Plight of the Homeless Veteran

As the temperature drops here in Central Illinois and we all begin to get ready for the holidays let’s take a moment to think about those “other people”. The ones we so often walk by on the street because they may not be dressed very well or be very clean. Maybe they are holding up a sign that says they are a Veteran and we say to ourselves, “Sure you are. A Veteran wouldn’t be sleeping on the streets begging for help.” Don’t be too sure. The VA estimates that on any given night there are over 107,000 homeless Veterans and over the course of a year twice as many will experience homelessness. (National Coalition for Homeless Veterans; www.nchv.org, 2007-2010)

Imagine the Veteran who has served our country and has come home to the welcome home parade and fanfare. He/ she left our homes with an innocence that will never be returned because when they return home a piece of the war returns with them. Multiple deployments and increased length of deployment have led to an increase in mental health and substance abuse issues. The wide eyed and innocent youth who leave to defend the freedom we all take for granted are often not the same when they return. Many are able to make the adjustments, have the support of family and friends and seek out the help they need, but many don’t. Those are the Veterans who so quickly can end up valiantly saving someone’s life one day to sleeping in the streets the next.

Homelessness is not something which only affects the Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) Veterans. It affects the Vietnam and Korean era Veterans as well. These Veterans were not as fortunate to receive the grand welcome home parades and honor guard receptions yet still brought back pieces (Continued on page 4)

Senate Draft of FY 2011 Appropriations

On December 14, the Senate Appropriations Committee released a draft proposal for fiscal year (FY) 2011 appropriations, which includes funding for many homelessness assistance programs. The House passed its version of the legislation last week. The draft Senate legislation includes the following funding:

- $2.2 billion for McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants ($145 million over the House level and $335 million over FY 2010);
- $125.7 million for Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) programs ($10 million over both the House and FY 2010 levels);
- $85 million for 10,000 vouchers under the proposed new Housing and Services for Homeless Persons Demonstration;
- $75 million for 10,000 new HUD-VA Supportive Housing (VASH) vouchers; and

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NHTF: Final Push for Funding

A s reported the week of December 6, funding for the National Housing Trust Fund (NHTF) has become entangled with legislation to extend the Bush-era tax cuts (see Memo, 12/3). A Senate bill that would extend the tax cuts on incomes of $250,000 or less and other tax provisions, but did not contain NHTF funding, failed to get sufficient votes to move forward in the Senate last week.

President Obama, working with the Republican leadership, announced a compromise package on December 7 that would continue all of the Bush tax cuts for two years, extend federal unemployment benefits for 13 months, provide a 2 percent reduction in payroll taxes for one year, and reduce estate taxes. This package does not include NHTF funding either.

The compromise met with mixed reactions on the Hill, with some Republicans and many Democrats objecting to all or parts of it. The lack of consensus is an obstacle to quick approval and may provide an opportunity for changes, such as adding NHTF funding back to the bill.

Late on December 9, Senator Jack Reed (D-RI) circulated for signatures from other Senators a letter to President Barack Obama and a letter to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) and Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-MT); both letters urge that NHTF be included in the package prior to the Senate voting on it.

NLIHC sent a Call to Action to encourage senators to sign on to the letters. In less than 24 hours, 18 senators joined Senator Reed on the letters. They are Senators Chris Dodd (D-CT), Robert Casey, Jr. (D-PA), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Robert Menendez (D-NJ), Mark Begich (D-AK), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), John Kerry (D-MA), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Ben Cardin (D-MD), Chris Coons (D-DE), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Tom Udall (D-NM), and Carl Levin (D-MI). Senator Chuck Schumer (D-NY) signed the letter to the President, but not the letter to the Senate leaders. The

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Comments on NHTF Regs Due December 28

C omments on HUD’s proposed regulations to implement the NHTF are due December 28. The regulations were issued on October 29.

NLIHC has prepared a sample comment letter for advocates to use to craft their own comment letters. Advocates are urged to review it and submit their comments to HUD by the deadline.

The proposed rule’s failure to adopt income-based rents for tenants who

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On December 1, Representative Keith Ellison (D-MN) introduced the Rental Housing Revitalization Act (RHRA), which would authorize a key HUD initiative to preserve public housing, streamline rental assistance programs, and provide tenants more choice in where they live. Mr. Ellison circulated a discussion draft of his proposal in late October. This bill replaces HUD’s earlier PETRA proposal.

RHRA would allow but not require public housing agencies and some assisted housing owners to convert their subsidy streams to new property-based rental assistance contracts. The new contracts would provide increased funding for the converted units, which then could be used to leverage private resources to preserve the housing. Public housing funding has significantly lagged behind need for decades, causing more than 10,000 public housing units to leave the federal housing inventory annually. This bill would put policies and opportunities in place to arrest these losses, protect tenants, and preserve housing.

Because the bill would encourage public housing agencies to take on private debt, the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) and other advocates have urged HUD and Congress to do everything possible to make sure that public housing remains public, i.e., preserving the nation’s public housing investment in case agencies default on the private loans and the property goes into foreclosure.

HUD has been working on this proposal since 2009. Following several months of stakeholder consultations, it released a draft proposal in May 2010, weeks before the House Committee on Financial Services held a hearing on the proposal. Mr. Ellison worked closely with HUD and stakeholders to further develop the bill, initially called Transforming Rental Assistance (TRA) and more recently Preservation, Enhancement, and Transformation of Rental Assistance (PETRA).

NLIHC has analyzed RHRA and found many improvements compared with the HUD’s earlier PETRA proposal. Among them:

- For converted public housing units, HUD must offer and a public housing agency must extend the initial 20-year rental agreement.

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HUD Releases New CHAS Data

On December 7, HUD released the newest version of the Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) data, based on special tabulations of the 2006-2008 American Community Survey (ACS). CHAS data are used to determine the number of households in need of housing assistance. State and local governments use the data in their consolidated planning processes while advocates use them to determine need in their states, counties and cities. The previous version of this dataset was based on the 2005-2007 ACS.

The 2006-2008 dataset has tables that were not included in the 2005-2007 version. One allows users to see housing problems that different types of families (elderly, small and large) experience and others provide information on the affordability of rental and homeownership units by structure size. This update also added cities, called “places,” to the list of geographies for which data can be downloaded. It is now possible to generate CHAS tables at the state, county and city level. Once five-year ACS data are released this month, the Census Bureau and HUD will begin work on 2005-2009 CHAS data, which will drill down to the Census tract level.

Users cannot access data on the State of the Cities Data System Simple Query System, as they could for 2000 data. For now, they must download the raw data files and import them into such software as SPSS, SAS, STATA or Excel. It is expected that this platform will be updated in 2011.

For more information on the CHAS data and instructions on how to use them, visit: http://www.huduser.org/portal/datasets/cp.html

Point in Time Count Terminology Change

Communities are currently preparing for the 2011 Point-in-Time (PIT) counts required by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In 2011, homeless veterans, chronically homeless families, and unaccompanied homeless children will all need to be counted. Unaccompanied homeless children, formerly referred to by HUD as unaccompanied homeless youth, are being defined strictly as homeless persons under the age of 18 not accompanied by an adult. Homeless youth age 18 or older should be counted as homeless individuals. For more information on the terminology change, go to www.hudhre.info/documents/2011PITYouthGuidance.pdf
Homeless Veteran

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of the war which haunt them to this day. Homelessness is an area which has no prejudice. It will inflict anyone and crosses all racial barriers.

President Obama and Deputy Shinseki have made it a priority to end homelessness among Veterans within five (5) years. We are one (1) year into this so how are we doing? Is this more government speak or is there really something being done to end this tragedy?

There is an active and concentrated effort on the part of the government and the VA to end homelessness among Veterans within five years. A major player in this effort in Illinois is the VA Illiana Healthcare System (VAIHCs), based at the Danville Medical Center in Danville, Illinois. VAIHCs serves a 250 square mile catchment area which includes Lafayette, Indiana, and in Illinois, Danville, Champaign/Urbana, Bloomington, Decatur, Peoria, Springfield, Paxton, Mattoon/Charleston and many smaller towns in between. It has out-patient clinics located in Decatur, Springfield, Peoria, and Mattoon, Illinois, and Lafayette, Indiana.

VAIHCs has employed a Grant and Per Diem Liaison/Homeless Veteran Program Coordinator Social Worker, a Housing and Urban Development/VA Supported Housing (HUD/VASH) Social Worker, Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) Outreach Worker and HUD/VASH Program Support Person. VAIHCs is in the process of hiring a Veterans Justice Outreach Worker (VJO) and hopes to be able to hire a Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Social Worker in the near future. These positions, some of them new to the VA, have allowed the VAIHCs to expand services to our nation’s heroes throughout its catchment area.

The VAIHCs HCHV Outreach worker makes weekly visits to VA out-patient clinics as well as local homeless shelters and rescue missions in the catchment area. She is registering veterans for VA medical care, providing basic essentials such as clothing, toiletries, etc, and helping the Veteran to find and access temporary/transitional housing in a variety of facilities.

The VAIHCs services for homeless Veterans include emergency housing, transitional housing, and permanent supported housing. The emergency housing currently is provided by the Danville Rescue Mission. VAIHCs contracts with the Mission for fourteen beds in a Veteran Dorm. These beds are rarely empty. In addition to these 14 beds we have available three emergency beds in the event a homeless Veteran comes to our medical center in the middle of the night and needs a place to stay.

Also available are Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) Severe Mental Illness (SMI) facilities. VAIHCs has eight beds available at Heritage Behavioral Health Center in Decatur and five beds at South Side Office of Concern/New Hope Apartments in Peoria for Veterans who need case management services in addition to housing. This is a six month program for Veterans who have a mental illness diagnosis and need assistance to make the transition from the shelter or the street to permanent housing.

The Grant and Per Diem (GPD) program is a two year program which provides case management services, life skills, and job training services to Veterans who are living in this supported environment. VAIHCs has ten GPD beds at South Side Office of Concern/New Hope Apartments in Peoria and ten beds at Home Sweet Home Ministries in Bloomington.

The final option for our Veterans is HUD/VASH. This is permanent supported housing in Section 8 approved housing with the support of a VA social work case manager. Veterans receive a housing choice voucher and may use it for a percentage or all of their rent depending on their income. They do not have to re-apply for the voucher yearly. These vouchers are allocated by HUD yearly to specific housing authorities. VAIHCs received thirty-five vouchers in 2009 and currently has thirty-two chronically homeless Veterans housed. This is the first home for some of these Veterans. This program addresses the ultimate goal for ending homelessness.

VAIHCs did not receive any vouchers for 2010 but hopes to receive some for 2011.

VAIHCs as well as the other VA Homeless Coordinators have developed a strategic plan on how they will end homelessness in their areas which will thereby add to the overall strategic plan for the Veterans Health Administration’s goal to end homelessness. A primary addition to this strategic plan is the Homeless Hotline. This allows a Veteran to call (877) 424-3838 and be connected to a person 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year. The Veteran will speak with a worker who will then send a notification to the point of contact in
Homeless Veteran

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his/her catchment area so that the Veteran may receive assistance as soon as possible. This hotline has been active since April 2010 and VAIHCS is averaging 3-6 hotline calls a week at this time. If each facility can work within its catchment area and with the community to achieve cooperation this goal can be achieved.

The story of Gail provides a good example of how the homeless hotline can really make a difference in the life of a homeless veteran. She had lost her job in Tennessee and drove to Illinois in order to be closer to family. Gail was sleeping in her car. She used the phone of a nearby resident to call the hotline and was put in touch with me, the point of contact (POC) at this facility. I talked with Gail and then met with our HUD/VASH Social Worker. We determined she may be eligible for HUD/VASH. As a temporary placement we worked with the local Salvation Army who was able to provide us with a voucher and we were able to house Gail at a local motel while we met with her to determine if she was eligible for HUD/VASH. She stayed at this motel for four (4) days until we were able to put her into case management in the HUD/VASH program. We then contacted the Salvation Army again who was able to house Gail in a different motel for a more extended period of time until we could get her into a Women’s Shelter while we processed her paperwork to get her a housing choice voucher. Gail stayed in the Candlewood Motel for a week until we were able to get her into the Your Family Resource Center Women’s Shelter. During this period of time she worked closely with Tim Jobin, HUD/VASH Social Worker and myself to get the medical supplies she needed as well as the housing choice voucher and locate an apartment. Gail stayed in the women’s shelter approximately two (2) weeks before she located an apartment. She moved in a week later. When she left the women’s shelter they gave her many household items to start her apartment with as well as non-perishable food items. Gail went from her car to an apartment in approximately one (1) month.

Working together as a community is the key. The VA is an excellent organization which will provide many excellent services for our Veterans, but unless the VA and the community organizations work together to help the Veterans reintegrate and become part of these communities we won’t truly be successful. After the Veteran has maintained his/her housing and as he/she is reestablishing stability in their life, the HUD/VASH program tries to connect the newly housed Veterans to church functions, community events, picnics, sporting events and volunteer activities in the community where they are living. This helps the Veteran get to know his/her neighbors. In my mind, this will be the measure of success for this program.

I ask one thing as you finish reading this. The next time you are walking down the street or driving by and you see someone sitting on the side of the road or in front of the local Kroger holding a sign that reads homeless Veteran; take a moment and think how you would feel if that was your father, son, daughter, brother, or sister. Remember, the reason we are able to enjoy the freedoms we have today are because of the Veterans who were willing to write a check to the United States Government for up to and including the cost of their lives. How much is your life worth?

For further information, contact Jennifer Gerrib, LCSW at (217) 554-5679, or jennifer.gerrib@va.gov.

Appropriations

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$159.4 million for Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) programs targeted toward people experiencing homelessness ($17 million over both the House and FY 2010 levels).

At this point, the Senate was expected to vote on this package as soon as December 15. The stopgap measure funding the government expires on Saturday, December 18.

For further information, contact the National Alliance To End Homelessness at the address in Headlines Directory.

NHTF Regs

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will live in NHTF units remains a significant concern. Rather than limiting rent to 30% of household income, the rule would allow owners of NHTF units to charge a flat rent equal to the greater of 30% of 30% of area median income (AMI) or 30% of the poverty line. This approach means that households with incomes less than these amounts will pay more than 30% of their incomes for rent. Advocates are strongly encouraged to address this critical issue in their comments.

The proposed rule and instructions for filing comments are at: http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2010/pdf/2010-27069.pdf

The sample comment letters is at: http://www.nlihc.org/doc/Sample_Letter_NHTF_Proposed_Regulations.pdf
assistance contract. When this happens, the use agreement keeping rents affordable and other key features would be extended, as well. The earlier version would have allowed but not required HUD to offer contract renewals and there was no requirement that owners accept them.

HUD would be authorized to streamline voucher administration with regional portability agreements among public housing agencies and establish a single location to apply for all area rental assistance waiting lists. This is a new provision.

Tenants would have a statutory right to organize, with funding not less than currently provided. Some funds would be awarded noncompetitively and some competitively. HUD’s version would have authorized but not required the department to competitively award tenant participation grants. In addition, tenant groups would have had to compete for a potentially smaller pool of funds.

Voucher holders and others in converted units would have procedural rights related to denial of admission hearings and adverse housing agency decisions on income, rent, unit size, termination of assistance, and continued eligibility. Currently, voucher holders do not have these rights.

Legitimate tenant groups of converted properties must have access to building

information. HUD’s draft did not include this provision.

Section 3, which requires certain HUD grantees to hire and train low income people, would apply to all converted properties. HUD’s draft did not require it for units converted to property-based contracts.

H. R. 6468 includes several changes from Mr. Ellison’s October discussion draft. It defines “legitimate tenant organizations,” removes the requirement that their members be elected, and ensures that they receive no less funding for tenant participation than they would have their original subsidy stream. The bill also clarifies that tenants and tenant organizations have the right to hold meetings in buildings receiving rental assistance.

The new bill also provides more procedural rights for tenants in units converted to property-based contracts. It would give more time to those denied, terminated, or evicted from assistance to request a review of the housing agency’s actions. Applicants and tenants would be able to review their files and obtain materials used to support the housing agency’s action or its failure to act.

When HUD transfers a rental assistance contract to a different property, allowed only when it finds the property physically obsolete and following tenant consultation, HUD also must transfer the monthly rental assistance payments. The bill makes clear that any transfer of the contracts must comply with nondiscrimination and fair housing laws.

Four co-sponsors joined Mr. Ellison in introducing the bill: Representatives Emanuel Cleaver (D-MO), Donna Edwards (D-MD), Al Green (D-TX), and James Himes (D-CT). The bill was referred to the Financial Services Committee, and no action is expected this year. Mr. Ellison is expected to reintroduce the RHRA bill, incorporating additional changes in response to stakeholder input, in the 112th Congress.

NLIHC will work to further enhance the RHRA bill. Specifically, NLIHC remains concerned that it does not authorize new housing choice vouchers. The bill has a resident choice option, which would give public housing tenants the right to move with a voucher. However, these vouchers would come from the housing agency’s regular pool, thus prolonging applicants’ time on the waiting list. In addition, NLIHC will seek an improved one-for-one replacement policy for hard housing units and more protections when for-profit organizations take ownership of converted units, which can occur when low income housing tax credits are used.

To read H.R. 6468 go to: www.nlihc.org/doc/RHRA_December_1_2010.pdf

NLIHC’s PETRA Watch page is located at: www.nlihc.org/template/page.cfm?id=262

NHTF Funding

Previous iterations of the tax bill have included a two year extension of the GO Zone Low Income Housing Tax Credits and a one year extension of the Tax Credit Exchange Program (see Memo, 9/17). The current package has a one-year extension of the GO Zone tax credits through January 1, 2012. The National Low Income Housing Coalition continues to call on Congress to extend the deadline for two years and include the tax credits in the exchange program.

To read the letters to President Obama and to Senators Reid and Baucus, go to: http://www.nlihc.org/doc/NHTF_Letter_to Obama.pdf and http://www.nlihc.org/doc/NHTF_Letter_to Reid_Baucus.pdf
Arthur J. Schmitt Foundation
P.O. Box 520
Wilmette, IL 60091-0520
Contact: John A. Donahue, Exec. Dir.
Type of Grantmaker: Independent foundation

Limitations: Giving limited to the metropolitan Chicago, IL, area, except for two universities. No grants to individuals, or for capital or building funds, research, or matching gifts; no loans.

Financial Data (Year ended 6/30/09):
Total giving: $742,500
Giving activities include: $742,500 for grants.
Number of Staff: 1 part-time professional.

Purpose and Activities: Giving primarily to Catholic educational institutions for scholarships and fellowships established at certain selected universities to aid students in pursuing graduate degrees; grants to a few Catholic secondary schools, and to three mentoring and scholarship programs for high school students; a few grants also to charitable agencies to help alleviate poverty, homelessness, drug addictions, illiteracy, racism and other social ills, all in the Chicago, Illinois, area. Fields of Interest: Education; Human services.

Types of Support: Continuing support; Fellowships; General/operating support; Scholarship funds.


CNA Foundation
(formerly CNA Insurance Companies Foundation)
333 S. Wabash Ave., 44th Fl.
Chicago, IL 60604-4107
Telephone: (312) 822-5000
Contact: Gina Lockhart, Prog. Coord.
E-mail: gina.lockhart@cna.com
URL: www.cna.com/portal/site/cna/about/

Type of Grantmaker: Company-sponsored foundation

Limitations: Giving primarily in Chicago. No support for political organizations, professional associations, labor, alumni, or fraternal organizations or social clubs, religious organizations not of direct benefit to the entire community, discriminatory organizations, or grantmaking foundations. No grants to individuals (except for employee-related emergency disaster relief grants), or for political, legislative, lobbying, or advocacy efforts, endowed chairs or professorships, endowments, advertising or raffles, tickets for testimonial events or similar benefit events from which only a portion of the revenue reaches the sponsor, or dinners or golf tournaments.

Financial Data (Year ended 12/31/09):
Total giving: $2,673,022
Giving activities include: $2,673,022 for 180 grants (high: $150,000; low: $25)

Number of Staff: 2 part-time professional

Purpose and Activities: The foundation supports organizations involved with arts and culture, health, human services, community development, and civic affairs. Special emphasis is directed toward programs designed to meet the educational needs of children; assist and support children, youth, and adults in developing vocational and education skills; and support economically disadvantaged children and families.

Fields of Interest: Boys & girls clubs; Community/economic development; Education; Elementary/secondary education; Employment; Employment, training; Health care; Human services; Public affairs; Vocational education. Types of Support: Continuing support; Curriculum development; Employee-related scholarships; Employee matching gifts; Grants to individuals; Program development; Scholarship funds. Application Information: Additional information may be requested at a later date. Multi-year funding is not automatic. Requests for Community Involvement Grants are accepted from employees only. Application form required. Initial approach: Download application form and mail proposal and application form to foundation. Copies of proposal: 1. Deadline(s): None. Final notification: 6 months.
HOMELESS HEADLINES

ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCIES

3435 LIBERTY DRIVE
SPRINGFIELD, IL 62704