

# Arizona

Housing and Community Development

## LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES



Presented by

**Arizona Chapter  
National Association of Housing  
& Redevelopment Officials  
and  
Arizona Housing Authority  
Director's Association**

**March 2010**

## NAHRO

### *Building communities together*

#### MISSION STATEMENT

The National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) is a professional membership organization comprised of 9,500 housing and community development agencies and officials throughout the United States who administer a variety of affordable housing community development programs at the local level.

NAHRO's mission is to create affordable housing and safe, viable communities that enhance the quality of life for all Americans, especially those of low- and moderate-income by:

- Ensuring that housing and community development professionals have the leadership skills, education, information and tools to serve communities in a rapidly changing environment.
- Advocating for appropriate laws and policies which are sensitive to the needs of people served, are financial and programmatically viable for our industry, are flexible, promote deregulation and local decision making; and
- Fostering the highest standards of ethical behavior, service and accountability.

NAHRO enhances the professional development and effectiveness of its members through its comprehensive professional development curriculum, conferences, and publications. Through these efforts we are working to equip NAHRO and our membership with the skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary to survive and prosper in changing environment, and make our Association more efficient and effective.

#### ARIZONA LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

In cooperation, the Arizona Chapter of National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) and the Arizona Housing Director's Association have identified those legislative priorities that are needed to serve the citizens and communities of Arizona.

These are difficult times. Prolonged turmoil in the mortgage and financial sectors has highlighted the serious challenges facing the affordable housing and community development industry. Foreclosed and abandoned homes continue to plague neighborhoods. A backlog of deferred modernization estimated to be in excess of \$30 billion has placed the nation's and Arizona's public housing inventory at risk.

Successfully confronting today's challenges will require a significant and sustained federal investment in, and commitment to, a comprehensive set of housing and community development tools. Transformation of existing programs to improve their effectiveness and efficiency, in tandem with the design of new and innovative responses, is required both to build and recent progress and address outstanding issues.

## SUMMARY AGENDA

The following summary highlights actions that Arizona NAHRO and AHADA (Arizona Housing Director's Association) believe are necessary during this difficult time in our nation's history.

### *Preserve Arizona's Investment in Public Housing*

Move the public housing inventory toward a sustainable operating environment by enacting NAHRO's proposal to allow public housing agencies (PHAs) to voluntarily convert public housing units to Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) project-based rental assistance; increase the options available to PHAs for addressing the capital needs of their properties; restore dedicated funding to address safety and security concerns connected to drug-related crime; continue to provide dedicated funding for the revitalization of severely distressed public housing units.

### *Promote Reasonable and Flexible Federal Oversight*

Reduce unnecessary or duplicative regulatory and administrative burdens for housing and community development programs; and regulate smaller PHAs in a manner commensurate with financial risk.

### *Strengthen and Simplify the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Rental Assistance Programs*

Enact the Section Eight Voucher Reform Act (SEVRA) and implement regulatory and administrative revisions that ensure an efficient use of funds and build on the program's track record of success; provide adequate funding for Housing Assistance Payment contract renewals and ongoing administrative fees.

### *Maintain HUD's Role as the Leading Federal Partner For Community and Economic Development*

Restore full funding for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) formula program; preserve HUD's core economic development tools; discontinue burdensome restrictions on the responsible use of eminent domain for community revitalization; provide incremental funding to facilitate innovative transit-oriented planning and development.

### *Dramatically Expand Affordable Housing Opportunities*

Fully fund the Home Investment Partnerships (HOME) Program and HUD's homeless assistance programs; capitalize the Housing Trust Fund; ensure the successful implementation of McKinney-Vento program reforms; and preserve the viability of the Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program.

### *Address the Unique Needs of Smaller Agencies and Rural Communities*

Guarantee smaller agencies and rural localities access to new programs such as the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative and the Sustainable Communities Initiative; enact legislation to provide small PHAs with significant regulatory and administrative relief; restore dedicated, stand-alone funding for HUD's Rural Housing and Economic Development program; improve the performance of housing programs administered by federal agencies other than HUD.

### *Incentivize Green Building and Energy Efficiency*

Allow the use of Capital Fund resources as part of energy performance contracts; implement new green and energy policies that meet the unique needs of small PHAs; and provide funding for the energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program.

## HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER (HCV) RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

The Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program provides rental assistance to over 20,600 low-income families in Arizona. The HCV program is one of the most critical affordable housing options available to Arizona residents. Administered by city, county, multi-county and state public housing agencies (PHAs), the program helps families, seniors and persons with disabilities live stable and independent lives; helps the working poor to become self-sufficient; and enables families to live in neighborhoods where poverty is not concentrated.

A current issue at hand is legislation that has yet to be passed. It is vital that Congress enact the Section Eight Voucher reform Act (SEVRA) and implement regulatory and administrative revisions that ensure an efficient use of funds and build on the program's track record of success.

In order to continue this much needed program please support the following actions:

- Support Legislative, Regulatory and Administrative Reforms;
- Support the enactment of SEVRA to improve the Section Housing Choice Voucher Program;
- Ensure stable voucher HAP and administrative fee funding;
- Maintain full funding for the project-based Section 8 program; and
- Support of HUD's program of 10,000 competitive vouchers for homeless populations.



## COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

State and local community revitalization initiatives are a needed resource throughout Arizona. In a time in communities are being hardest hit by the economic times, these programs are a key solution in stabilizing communities and neighborhoods. The following actions must be taken:

- Secure full funding for the CDBG program to ensure the success of state and local efforts to spur job creation, provide vital public services, and expand affordable housing opportunities;
- Increase funding for the Home Investment Partnerships (HOME) Program;
- Address the Unique Needs of Smaller Agencies and Rural Communities;
- Ensure the Success of the Neighborhood Stabilization Program; and
- Incentivize Green Building & Increased Energy Efficiency

### NEIGHBORHOOD STABILIZATION PROGRAM (NSP)

The Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) will fortify neighborhoods hardest hit by the foreclosure crisis while also providing new affordable housing opportunities. Because 25 percent of NSP funding must be used to support activities that result in the provision of affordable housing for individuals or families at or below 50 percent of area median income, it is realistic to expect that a substantial amount of NSP funding will be used to support the expansion of the affordable rental housing inventory. Arizona NAHRO PHAs are uniquely qualified to understand and respond to the affordable housing needs of the low-income residents of the communities in which they operate. Arizona NAHRO:

- Continues to encourages policymakers to take steps to promote the involvement of PHAs in state and local NSP implementation; and
- Urges the Administration and Congress to work closely with stakeholders, including NAHRO and Arizona NAHRO, in an effort to identify and act upon any challenges that arise as NSP2 grantees commit and expend funding.

### Incentivize Green Building & Increased Energy Efficiency

NAHRO and Arizona NAHRO support the application of green building, sustainable design, and energy efficiency principles within federal housing and community development programs. Public policies in this area should incentivize rather than mandate the adoption of these principles by local agencies that administer federal housing and community development programs.

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) HOME INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIPS (HOME) PROGRAM

Arizona NAHRO believes that HUD could be one of the most important federal partners for our state and local community revitalization. In these difficult economic times, it is clear that a full-scale recovery will require a focused, coordinated, and ongoing effort at all levels of government. Now more than ever, state and local agencies need HUD to be a strong and supportive partner committed to the successful implementation of community revitalization strategies.

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG)** should be fully funded. For over 30 years the CDBG program has empowered states, local governments, and their partners to rebuild local economies, strengthen public infrastructure, and improve the quality of life for millions of low-and moderate-income Americans. This flexible program emphasizes local decision-making and prioritization of needs and ensures accountability through citizen participation and performance measurement.

Given the importance of job creation and public service provision during an economic downturn, the need for CDBG funding in states and localities across the nation is as great as it has ever been. In spite of the program's proven track record, CDBG formula funding declined by 17 percent from FY 2004 to FY 2009, even before adjusting for inflation. Fortunately, Congress provided additional CDBG resources through ARRA, and, at the Administration's request, increased CDBG formula funding for FY 2010. Despite this welcome progress, the program's funding level is still insufficient to meet the significant community development needs of states and local governments. In 2010 NAHRO and Arizona NAHRO will continue its efforts to restore full funding for the CDBG formula program to ensure the success of state and local efforts to spur job creation and retention, provide vital public services, and expand affordable housing opportunities for low and moderate income families and individuals.

**DRAMATICALLY EXPANDING AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES.** To expand affordable housing Arizona NAHRO urges the Administration to fully fund the Home Investment Partnerships (HOME) program. As our nation continues to endure an affordable housing crisis, restoring HOME program formula funding is critically important. The proven and effective HOME program empowers states and localities to design and implement affordable housing strategies to respond to locally determined needs. Arizona NAHRO supports working toward the development of a federal housing policy that strikes a more appropriate balance between promoting responsible homeownership and addressing the nation's acute shortage of affordable rental housing units.

**The HOME program** makes possible the construction, acquisition, or rehabilitation of homeowner units, homebuyer units, and rental units. HOME also provides tenant-based rental assistance programs to assist struggling families who are unable to secure a Housing Choice Voucher due to long waiting lists at local Public Housing Authorities.

## PUBLIC HOUSING

Arizona public housing agencies (PHAs) own and operate approximately 6,800 units of federally subsidized public housing. Public housing serves families, elderly and disabled persons who are among the nation's poorest. HUD administers operating subsidy provided under the Public Housing Operating Fund, which is supposed to bridge the gap between public housing rents, which are limited by law, and operating expenses. Additionally, HUD supplies funding for the capital needs of public housing projects under the Public Housing Capital Fund. Until last year, HUD's requests, and the amounts actually appropriated, for public housing have been alarmingly insufficient. For FY 2011, the administration requests a total of 4.829 billion for the Public Housing operating Fund. The administration portrays its request as "100 percent of public housing Authorities estimated eligibility for operating subsidies under the Operating Fund formula." Arizona NAHRO and AHADA applaud the requested funding level but recommend \$5.084 billion for the operating Fund for FY 2011, with this recommendation based on a methodology the housing industry believes better reflects the 2004 negotiated rule.

Arizona NAHRO and the Arizona Housing Directors Association (AHADA) shall:

- Support the enactment of federal legislation to preserve the existing public housing stock by addressing the unfunded capital needs of public housing through the use of federal income tax credits, tax credit supported bonds and other means. This includes supporting the President initiative for transforming rental assistance in the form of project based voucher funding as an option to create a vehicle to leverage the redevelopment of Public Housing.
- Encourage the utilization of public housing assets by fully enabling PHAs to finance the rehabilitation and preservation of public housing by encumbering public housing properties as contemplated by the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998 (QHWRA).
- Continue to participate in the development of legislation to reauthorize the HOPE VI program that is both workable and generally accessible to PHAs of varying sizes.

**Arizona NAHRO and AHADA support \$5.084 billion for the Public Housing Operating Fund and supports \$2.5 billion for the Public Housing Capital Fund for FY 2010.**



Winslow Public Housing



Chandler Public Housing



Phoenix Senior Housing

While infusions of capital funds through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act have helped to address some of the PHAs' most immediate needs, Arizona NAHRO strongly believes that funding received through the Recovery Act and any other supplemental funding should not be offset by cuts in the annual Capital Fund appropriation. The President's budget includes \$2.044 billion for the Public Housing Capital fund for FY 2011, down from the appropriated level of \$2.5 billion for FY 2010.

#### *Federal Oversight*

Excessive federal regulation of PHAs diminishes the return on existing appropriated resources. It also undermines PHAs' ability to leverage new resources. In short, PHAs are charged with the responsibility for providing housing for the nation's poorest renters, yet they are denied the flexibility that is necessary to embrace this vital mission in the most effective manner. Accordingly, Arizona NAHRO and AHADA shall:

- Support reform of the contractual relationship between PHAs and the federal government so that federal administrative and regulatory demands fairly reflect resources provided, and federal subsidies for public housing are predictable, adequate and stable;
- Continue to advocate for a reasonable transition to asset management of public housing with a permanent optional exemption for agencies operating fewer than 500 public housing units;
- Continue the Administrative Reform Initiative (ARI) process begun at HUD in 2007 for regulatory and administrative reform and seek meaningful, practicable reform of federal oversight activities pertaining to PHAs and the federal programs they administer;
- Explore with HUD and Congress enactment of a program to achieve substantial deregulation of small PHAs; and
- Work to develop alternatives to existing methods of evaluating the performance of PHAs and their programs and properties that are fair and equitable with the housing providers.

## **HOMELESS ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS**

Congress enacted major reforms of HUD's McKinney-Vento homeless assistance programs in 2009. NAHRO and Arizona NAHRO strongly supported many of these important reforms, including new flexibility to prevent at-risk families from falling into homelessness. The impact of the current economic crisis has illuminated the importance of maintaining adequate program funding. In 2010 Arizona NAHRO will:

- Seek full funding for HUD's homeless assistance programs by emphasizing the need for program funding to keep pace with the rising cost of renewing expiring contracts; and
- Continue to encourage full funding of programs which serve homeless veterans.

Homelessness is a very complex social and economic issue that can affect anyone. Structural issues such as poverty, disability, and lack of safe and affordable housing increase the prevalence of homelessness within our nation and state. Loss of a job, a health crisis, domestic violence, the loss of family support and a myriad of other events can trigger a downward spiral resulting in homelessness. Homelessness affects people of all ages and ethnic groups.

On an annual basis, Arizona communities conduct a point-in-time survey of those persons experiencing homelessness, including those persons who experience homelessness on the streets and those in emergency shelter. In 2009, the Arizona point-in-time survey identified 6,355 persons who are unsheltered, experiencing homelessness on the streets of our communities. Of this total, 30% of individuals experiencing homelessness meet the HUD definition of chronic homelessness. In 2009, the point-in-time survey reflected 4,080 persons experiencing homelessness in emergency shelter. This total includes 1,568 adults and children in families in emergency shelter – *38 percent of all sheltered persons*.

Families experiencing homelessness represent the fastest growing group of homeless people in the U.S. The Urban Institute has identified the lack of affordable housing as the primary cause of homelessness among families. Data generated each year by the Arizona Department of Housing show that housing is unaffordable due to the inadequate supply of affordable housing and because low incomes cause families to be unable to pay for the housing that is available. In many communities, the task of finding affordable is virtually impossible for families who have lost their housing.

## **ADDRESS THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF SMALLER AGENCIES AND COMMUNITIES**

Arizona NAHRO's diverse membership includes agencies representing communities of all sizes. As a National and State Organization, we are mindful of the importance of Federal Housing and Community Development Programs that are designed to meet the unique needs of smaller agencies and communities. At the same time, new and existing programs intended to serve the full spectrum of agency types should be accessible to smaller agencies as much as possible.

In 2010 Arizona NAHRO and NAHRO will:

- Continue to encourage the administration to refine its proposal, in concert with Congressional Authorizers, in order to ensure that rural communities and agencies have a meaningful opportunity to seek and secure choice neighborhoods funding;
- Continue to encourage the administration for inclusion of smaller communities in the access of new federal programs; and
- Continue to work with its members to formulate and communicate recommendations for improvements to existing programs in order to better meet the unique needs of rural communities and small agencies.

## FEDERAL OVERSIGHT

Excessive federal regulation of PHAs diminishes the return on existing appropriated resources while undermining the PHAs ability to leverage new resources. In short, PHAs are charged with the responsibility for providing housing for the nation's poorest renters, yet they are denied the flexibility that is necessary to embrace this vital mission in the most effective manner. Accordingly, **Arizona NAHRO and AHADA** shall:

- Seek to advance, in concert with industry partners, a legislative proposal to provide small PHAs with regulatory relief. This proposal, based on principles of financial risk, would eliminate unnecessary administrative and regulatory burdens on small PHAs and afford them reasonable flexibility in utilizing their resources;
- Support passage of the Asset Management Improvement Act of 2009, which, if enacted, would allow PHAs that own or operate fewer than 500 public housing units to elect to be exempt from asset management requirements;
- Support the development of alternatives to existing methods of evaluating the performance of PHAs and their programs. In this regard, assessment of PHA performance should be centered upon the physical quality of their properties and their financial performance (taking into account that adequate financial resources must be available to the PHA);
- Work with HUD to ensure that HUD's physical inspection process and physical condition scoring protocols are reasonable, transparent, and subject to an appeals process that is timely and straightforward; and
- Guard against the imposition of unfunded mandates and new, overly burdensome regulatory burdens association with revised Section 3 requirements for both public housing and community development programs.

## Supporting HUD's Ongoing Transformation Efforts

For many years there have been concerns about the functionality and organizational structure of HUD. As the new Administration assumed office, public discussions ensued about whether HUD's present organizational structure is well suited to carry out its mission successfully. Since any change in HUD's structure has the potential to impact local housing and community development agencies, Arizona NAHRO has strived to be an active participant in the national discussions concerning organization changes within the Department. In 2010 Arizona NAHRO will work to advance the following concepts:



In 2010 Arizona

- HUD's present organizational structure and its present emphasis on regulatory compliance should be reconsidered;
- A new and genuine commitment to partnership between HUD with state and local entities is necessary; and
- Significant further improvements should be made to HUD's information technology systems, including the PIH Information Center (PIC), the Voucher Management System (VMS), and the Integrated Disbursement and Information System (IDIS).



**ARIZONA HOUSING AGENCY UNIT AUTHORIZATIONS**

Agency	Public Housing Units	Section 8 Units	Combined Waiting Lists
Arizona Behavioral Health Corp.	0	125	518
Arizona State (Yavapai County)	0	89 & 35vash	55
Chandler	303	480	3631
Cochise County	0	390	690
Douglas	0	338	721
Eloy	50	159	201
Flagstaff	265	333	632
Gila County	0	53	200+
Glendale	155	1,054	1,565
Maricopa County	771	1,479	2,592
Mesa	0	1,525	3,893
Mohave County	0	322	580
Nogales	227	192	352
Peoria	70	82	498
Phoenix	2,557	5,992	28,456
Pinal County	169	584	900
Scottsdale	0	726	426
South Tucson	172	132	547
Tempe	0	1,082	2,505
Tucson/Pima County	1,505	5,021	9,600
Williams	30	47	300
Winslow	55	128	890
Yuma	235	1,122	3,909
Yuma County	159	401	1,653
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>6,723</b>	<b>21,668</b>	<b>61,552</b>



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