



MHP Capitol Update

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State Update

Minnesota Legislature Creates New Housing Caucus

This summer, Minnesota Housing Partnership and other advocates worked with legislators to find new ways to bring greater attention to housing issues. Although the group is relatively new, progress has already been made. One outcome is the creation of a new bipartisan, bicameral Housing Caucus at the Legislature. The Housing Caucus [“will engage with leaders involved in all facets of housing to find workable solutions to the problems and challenges that our communities face.”](#) wrote Representatives Karen Clark and Bob Gunther in recent letters inviting other legislators to join the group. Senators Larry Pogemiller, Mee Moua, David Senjem, Ellen Anderson, Linda Berglin, Dick Cohen, Scott Dibble, Mike Jungbauer, John Marty, and David Tomassoni distributed a [similar letter](#) last week.

Although caucus membership is limited to legislators, the entire housing community will need to come together to support and provide information to the lawmakers. The formation of the group already has presented opportunities for interested parties to participate. **Currently, we need your help in order to form a well-rounded, geographically diverse caucus that reflects the needs of all Minnesota communities. You can assist this effort by encouraging your representative and senator to join the caucus and ensure that your area’s needs are represented.** Please contact Julie Johnson, the Policy & Outreach Coordinator, for more information (651-783-2794, email jjohnson@mhponline.org), or assistance.

MHP will continue to inform you of other advocacy opportunities relating to the new caucus and related initiatives. In the meantime, we invite you to visit MHP’s new Housing Policy Workgroup Web page at <http://www.mhponline.org/?q=node/265>.

Upcoming Candidate Forums

Housing advocates and civic groups from around the state are hosting local candidate forums to help bring real issues (like housing & homelessness) to the forefront of this election season. We will keep you posted as events are announced so you can participate and let candidates know

that housing is a top priority for Minnesotans. Please note that all of these forums are strictly neutral and educational in nature and not an endorsement of any candidate.

Also, don't forget to check out the civic engagement tools such as candidate questions on MHP's Web site at <http://www.mhponline.org/?q=node/265>.

[September 23, 2008 @ 7:00 p.m.](#)

Districts 2B & 4A (Bemidji area)
Northwest Technical College Cafeteria
905 Grant Ave SE, Bemidji

The event is being sponsored by the MN Coalition for the Homeless, House of Hospitality, Northwood Coalition for Family Safety, Evergreen Community Services, Bi-County Community Action Program, Greater MN Racial Justice Project, BSU Social Work Program, and the MN Social Service Association.

[September 23, 2008 @ 6:30 p.m.](#)

36A, 37A, 37B, 38A, 38B, and 40A
Presbyterian Church of the Apostle
701 East 130th Street, Burnsville

All candidates for MN State House of Representative Districts, 36A, 37A, 37B, 38A, 38B, and 40A have been invited to participate in this forum. These districts include Burnsville, Apple Valley, Eagan, Lakeville, and Rosemount.

The forum is organized by MICA South, a chapter of the Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable Housing, CATCH (Coalition for Affordable Transitional Community Housing), CANA (Center for Africans New to America), Dakota County United Educators of ISD 196, DARTS, Dakota County Smoke Free Coalition, Shelter Corporation, Twin Cities Housing Development Corporation.

[September 30, 2008 \(Town Meeting @ 6:30 p.m., Candidate Forum @ 7:00 p.m.\)](#)

28A (Redwing)
Red Wing City Hall
Council Chambers
314 W. 4th St.
Red Wing, MN 55066

The event is being sponsored by the MN Coalition for the Homeless, United Way, Hope Coalition, and Three Rivers Community Action Program.

[October 1, 2008 @ 7:00 p.m.](#)

64A & 64B (St. Paul)
Hillcrest Recreation Center Auditorium
Highland Park Library, 1974 Ford Parkway, Saint Paul

Sponsored by the League of Women Voters, Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless, Sisters of St. Joseph, and College of St. Catherine.

[October 2, 2008 @ 6:00 p.m.](#)

Districts 25-31

Rochester International Event Center
7333 Airport View Drive SW, Rochester
<http://www.mn-voice.org/>

This event is sponsored by Minnesota Region 10 Quality Assurance, a group of people who work to develop a person-driven process to assess the quality of life and the quality of support provided to individuals with disabilities.

[October 7, 2008 @ 7:00 p.m.](#)

Districts 9A & 9B (Moorhead & Clay County)

Churches United for the Homeless

1901 1st Ave N, Moorhead

The event is being sponsored by the MN Coalition for the Homeless, the Fargo Moorhead Coalition for Homeless Persons, the People Escaping Poverty Project, "Homeless and Hungry," and the Dorothy Day House.

[October 7, 2008 @ 8:00 p.m.](#)

Districts 14A, 14B, 15A, & 15B (St. Cloud area)

Stearns History Museum

235 33rd Avenue South, St. Cloud

The event is being sponsored by the MN Coalition for the Homeless.

[October 7, 2008 @ 7:00 p.m.](#)

33B, 43A, 43B (Western Suburbs)

Plymouth City Hall

3400 Plymouth Blvd., Plymouth

The event is being sponsored by the MN Coalition for the Homeless.

[October 14, 2008](#)

40B (Bloomington)

TENTATIVE

The event is being sponsored by the MN Coalition for the Homeless.

[October 31, 2008 @ 6:00 p.m.](#)

District 1 Congressional

Old Main Village, Mankato

301 South 5th Street, Mankato

This event is sponsored by Minnesota Region 10 Quality Assurance, a group of people who work to develop a person-driven process to assess the quality of life and the quality of support provided to individuals with disabilities.

Federal Update

NAHRO and St. Paul Public Housing Authority Hold Housing Forum During RNC

On September 3, the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO), Minnesota NAHRO, the Saint Paul Public Housing Agency, and members of the Housing America campaign held a forum on affordable housing needs for RNC delegates and participants. Among many other speakers (including MHP's very own Chip Halbach) was Bruce Katz of the Brookings Institute. Katz, who was described by a local reporter in attendance as "a housing rock star," sounded off on the three main challenges facing the local and national housing arenas today: the affordability gap, transportation and location, and energy.

Starting with affordability, Katz explained that our current economy does not provide housing for everyone because of the large gap between pay and cost of living (housing, food, utilities, healthcare, etc.) for low- and moderate-income households. Furthermore, there are more low-income people than affordable housing units. These two items are the main barriers to making sure everyone has a place to call home.

Katz also said we need to be more cognizant of where affordable housing is situated. More poor people now live in suburbs than in central cities, but our housing policy focuses on major urban areas. This urban focus harkens back to the 1950s and 1960s when our current housing policies were formed. An up-to-date policy framework needs to be instituted that builds affordable housing where people work, seek medical services, receive education, and access other basic services.

Housing accounts for roughly 20 percent of American energy usage, said Katz. This percentage is considerably higher if you factor in the energy expended for transportation to and from your home. Housing advocates need to address energy usage and the environment as important parts of housing development and policy.

Katz concluded by saying that it is unlikely that we will see a major "housing" bill at the federal level in 2010. However, that does not mean there won't be significant opportunities to work on housing policy in 2010. In two years, he said, Congress will introduce historically-large tax, energy, and transportation bills. These will be great opportunities for housing advocates to improve housing policy at the federal level.

Federal Policy Forum on Housing and Economic Recovery Act

Set aside the morning of October 16 to get a comprehensive overview of the new federal housing legislation and what it will mean for Minnesota communities. The Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008, signed into law July 30, is the most significant new federal housing law enacted in decades. Federal and state officials and housing industry representatives will be on hand at the forum to describe how the new law will impact renters and homeowners in Minnesota and provide information on new tools for communities to address foreclosures. If you are interested in attending the Federal Housing Policy Forum, please contact us as soon as possible. For more information, please feel free to call Julie Johnson at 651-925-5548 with questions.

Congress Debates Federal Definition of Homelessness

As many of you know, the Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008 is not the only piece of important housing legislation that our representatives and senators have been working on recently. As the New York Times recently wrote, our federal lawmakers have been debating HUD's twenty year-old definition of homelessness. This is one of the best-rounded articles we've read about this topic in a long time. We highly recommend that you read it.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/16/washington/16homeless.html?pagewanted=1&adxnnl=1&ref=us&adxnnlx=1221584563-d0bilDLzrXABlocRIH4>

Project-Based Section 8 Program Continues to Face Hardship

The under-funding of HUD's Project-Based Section 8 program continues to plague program participants. With Congress juggling national elections and staring down the end of fiscal year 2008 on September 30, it is unlikely that an appropriations bill for 2009 will be completed on time. What is more likely is that a Continuing Resolution will be passed which will maintain 2008 funding levels until Congress passes an appropriations bill (probably sometime in early 2009).

Although this may sound like a good solution, it reads trouble for the Project-Based Section 8 program that has been chronically under-funded for the past few years. On September 16, a group of 10 national groups representing landlords that participate in the program sent a letter to Senate Appropriations Committee Chair Robert Byrd. The letter states that

It is imperative that Congress provide the specific authority for HUD to obligate funding for FY09 at an accelerated rate. This action will NOT increase the budget outlays but will enable the government to meet its contractual obligations.

If Congress fails to take this action, thousands of ownership entities will not receive their contracted funding and therefore will be unable to make their mortgage payments. Considering the mortgage crisis impacting single family housing, the last thing we need is an acceleration of mortgage foreclosures of multifamily properties. Owners and their lenders need a reliable funding stream for this housing to be preserved. Further three-and four-month payment delays also affect the ability of owners to adequately maintain the properties and provide the utility allowances to residents.

Distributed weekly during the Minnesota legislative session and monthly outside of session, the **MHP Capitol Update** provides information about state and national housing policy and politics that affect Minnesota. **MHP Capitol Update** is published by Minnesota Housing Partnership. To share ideas for future issues, to ask questions, or to unsubscribe, please contact Barb Jacobs at bjacobs@mhponline.org or 651-649-1710 ext. 117.

Minnesota Housing Partnership also publishes **The MHP Bulletin**. **The Bulletin** is distributed monthly, and includes affordable housing news and trend information, new research, publications, and upcoming events. Please contact Barb Jacobs at (651) 649-1710 ext. 117, email bjacobs@mhponline.org, to subscribe to **The Bulletin**.

Minnesota Housing Partnership's mission is to promote homes for all Minnesotans and to assist Minnesota communities in the creation and preservation of housing affordable to low- and moderate-income people.