

TOP STORIES

Senate releases FY21 funding bills.

On November 10 the Senate Appropriations Committee posted its versions of [all 12 appropriations bills](#) for fiscal year 2021, which started on October 1, 2020. The Senate will not take up these measures, but they establish starting positions for negotiations with the House and White House on an omnibus funding measure to cover the rest of the year. The current [continuing resolution](#) ends on December 11. For [USDA's rural housing programs](#), the [Senate bill](#) largely agrees with a bill passed by the House in July. Most would remain at their FY20 levels, though both the House and Senate increase Section 521 Rental Assistance to the \$1.410 billion requested by the Administration. Both offer less than the \$40 million requested by the Administration for the Multifamily Preservation and Revitalization program; the House provides \$30 million, the Senate \$28 million. For most [HUD programs](#), the Senate [proposes](#) funding levels at or slightly above FY20 amounts, though many are lower than the House levels. The HOME program, which received \$1.350 billion in FY20, would get \$1.7 billion in the House bill but \$1.375 billion in the Senate measure. CDBG received \$3.425 billion in FY20 and would get \$3.525 billion from the House or \$3.455 billion from the Senate. Both FY21 bills would keep SHOP at \$10 million and would hold Native American housing at essentially the same level as in FY20.

Register now for HAC's 2020 Virtual Symposium: Recovery Through Resiliency.

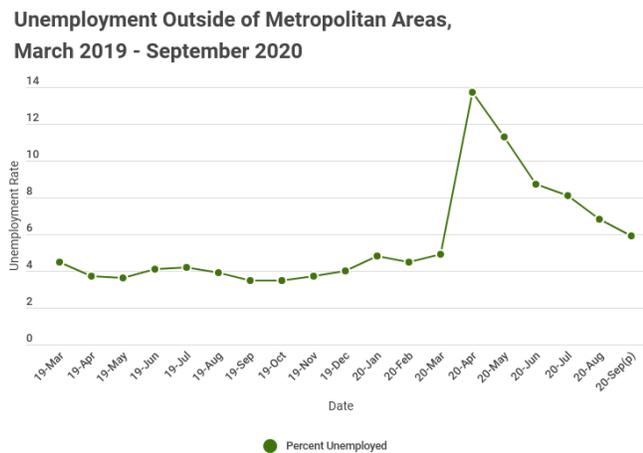
The Housing Assistance Council's [2020 Rural Housing Symposium: Recovery Through Resiliency](#) is finally here and it's a virtual affair! Join us online from wherever you are for a day filled with engaging speakers, invaluable rural practitioner perspectives, and a vast array of information on rural realities as well as opportunities to interact and reconnect with peers. There is no charge for this event. [Register here](#) and we'll see you online on December 3!

Biden housing platform supports USDA rural housing programs, 10-20-30 plan and more.

The Biden-Harris campaign's [policy platform](#) includes a plank to "ensure rural communities have access to affordable and accessible homes," mentioning the Section 502 direct and Section 515 programs by name. To address persistent poverty, it supports requiring every federal program to spend at least 10% of funds to communities where 20% or more of the population has lived below the poverty line for the last 30 years. The platform

RuralSTAT

The unemployment rate outside of metropolitan areas stands at 5.9% (preliminary – not seasonally adjusted). For the same period in 2019, the outside metro unemployment rate was 3.6%. *Source: HAC tabulations of Bureau of Economic Analysis – LAUS data.* An interactive version of this graphic is available [here](#).



Source: Housing Assistance Council tabulations of Bureau of Economic Analysis LAUS data



also supports existing HUD programs and pledges to reverse the Trump Administration's changes to regulations relating to affirmatively furthering fair housing, disparate impact, Housing First and the Community Reinvestment Act.

Possible candidates for USDA and HUD secretaries identified.

News media including [Politico](#), the [New York Times](#) and [USA Today](#) name former North Dakota Senator Heidi Heitkamp as a leading contender to become Secretary of Agriculture. HUD Secretary possibilities include former HUD officials Alvin Brown, Maurice Jones and Diane Yentel as well as Rep. Karen Bass (D-Calif.) and mayors Keisha Lance Bottoms of Atlanta and Eric Garcetti of Los Angeles. The names may change as the presidential transition process proceeds.

OPPORTUNITIES

HAC webinar on managing and maintaining supportive housing set for November 17.

From lease-up and tenant selection plans to property and asset management, [this webinar](#) will explain how to manage, maintain and protect supportive housing to ensure compliance with requirements, maintain fidelity to the Housing First model, and ensure the property is a benefit to the residents and the community. This is the third in a three-part series. Each webinar can be viewed on its own or as a part of the series. [Part I: Introduction to Supportive Housing](#) and [Part II: Financing Operations and Services in Supportive Housing](#) are available on [HAC's YouTube channel](#). For more information, contact [HAC staff](#).

HOPE VI Main Street grants available for communities under 50,000.

Local governments (excluding tribal governments) can [apply](#) by January 19 for funds to assist in the [renovation of an historic or traditional central business district](#) or "Main Street" area by replacing unused, obsolete commercial space in buildings with affordable housing units. For more information, contact [Susan Wilson](#), HUD.

CORONAVIRUS

CDC updates "considerations" for community-based organizations.

The [Centers for Disease Control](#) suggests actions for community-based organizations to consider in order to reduce the spread of COVID-19 as they resume or increase their activities.

"Rural America has been forgotten during the coronavirus crisis."

This issue brief from the [Center for American Progress](#) provides an update on the pandemic in rural counties, focusing on the spread of the virus and its impact on rural economies. The author notes that rural communities of color continue to experience the worst of the pandemic, but that now other rural communities – most notably in the upper Midwest and Great Plains regions – are experiencing severe outbreaks.

REGULATIONS AND FEDERAL AGENCIES

IRS proposes rule on income averaging in LIHTC properties.

[Comments](#) are due December 29 on [implementation](#) of the income averaging provisions adopted in 2018 legislation. The new Average Income Test will be one of three options for owners of Low Income Housing Tax Credit properties to ensure enough units are occupied by low-income residents to meet legal requirements. For more information, contact Dillon Taylor or Michael J. Torruella Costa, IRS, 202-317-4137.

HUD extends deadline for voucher comments.

[Comments](#) are now due [January 6](#) rather than December 7 on HUD's [proposal](#) to [implement](#) provisions of the Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act relating to the Housing Choice Voucher and Project-Based Voucher programs. For more information, contact HUD staff, HOTMAquestions@hud.gov.

Farmworker wage protections weakened.

A [final rule](#) from the Department of Labor changes the way that wage rate protections will be calculated for farmworkers whose employers use workers with temporary H-2A visas. Farmworker Justice [explains](#) that the rule means “the DOL will freeze the main wage rate under the H-2A program at the 2020 rates for two years, 2021 and 2022. In 2023 and later years DOL will adjust those rates based on a formula related to employment compensation trends generally in the prior year, locking in the impact of the two-year wage freeze forever and depriving farmworkers of recent modest improvements in wage levels.” The rule change appears to have been instituted hurriedly after USDA [announced](#) on September 30 that it was cancelling its quarterly Farm Labor Survey, which provides essential data used in the Department of Labor's calculations. Because of the survey's importance in wage calculations, the United Farm Workers filed a lawsuit challenging its cancellation. The judge hearing that case [observed](#) that DOL had very little advance notice of USDA's decision to end the survey and surmised that DOL was “scrambling” to devise a methodology that did not rely on the survey. On October 28 the judge issued a [preliminary injunction](#) requiring USDA to continue to conduct and publish the Farm Labor Survey. The case [is ongoing](#), but it does not directly impact the new DOL rule, which [takes effect](#) on December 21.

“Shortened census led to an incomplete count in some areas.”

A recent [Pew Charitable Trusts](#) article looks at where [ending the census count](#) on October 15, 2020 had the biggest impact. Challenges to collecting information were increased in areas hit by storms or outbreaks of COVID-19. Southwest Louisiana and tribal lands in Arizona, New Mexico and Utah faced some of the largest data collection gaps. Census undercounts could cause some areas to lose federal funding and congressional representation.

PUBLICATIONS AND MEDIA

Multifamily buildings can save energy within units, research brief says.

Studies have demonstrated that whole-building energy efficiency multifamily retrofits can lead to substantial energy and cost savings, but the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy says less is understood about the specific end use savings opportunities that exist inside residents' units.

[Understanding Multifamily Home Energy Efficiency Potential](#) identifies these uses, explores how savings opportunities vary by region and considers which end uses are contributing to high energy burdens experienced by low-income, non-white and Hispanic multifamily households.

“Rural hospitals are dying. This one saved itself – and its community.”

This [Time](#) article describes an innovative approach to keeping rural hospitals open. The “swing bed” program has brought in enough funds to revive the hospital in Clinch County, Georgia and allowed patients to be better cared for. The broader concept “has the potential to work nationwide,” according to an expert quoted in the article.

“What's it like to grow up Black in rural Ohio?”

This [Columbus Dispatch](#) article explores the racism that Black rural Ohioans of all ages feel living in primarily white communities.

The next HAC News will be published December 3.

In the meantime, breaking news will be posted on HAC's website, ruralhome.org.

Need capital for your affordable housing project?

HAC's [loan funds](#) provide low interest rate loans to support single- and multifamily affordable housing projects for low-income rural residents throughout the U.S. and territories. Capital is available for all types of affordable and mixed-income housing projects, including preservation, farmworker, senior and veteran housing. HAC loan funds can be used for pre-development, site acquisition, site development and construction/rehabilitation. Contact HAC's loan fund staff at hacloanfund@ruralhome.org, 202-842-8600.

Please note: HAC is not able to offer loans to individuals or families. Borrowers must be nonprofit or for-profit organizations or government entities (including tribes).

HAC News
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