



Housing Assistance Council
HAC News

Next continuing resolution may last through April 28. House leaders released the text of a new CR (H.R. 2028) on December 7, but at press time on December 8 it was not clear whether the bill would overcome objections related to coal miners' pensions. A shorter interim CR might be required to keep the government operating past midnight on December 9. To keep spending within the required caps, H.R. 2028 imposes a 0.19% across-the-board cut. It includes "anomalies" – specific deviations from FY16 funding – allowing flexibility in when funds are spent on USDA Section 538 loan guarantees and Tribal HUD-VASH vouchers, but does not increase funding for these programs or others. If final FY17 appropriations enacted by the new Congress do not increase funds for USDA and HUD vouchers, renewal funds for over 130,000 contracts will not be available. The CR also provides new CDBG disaster funds.

21st Century Cures Act and CR provide opioid funding. The 21st Century Cures Act, which passed the House on November 28 and the Senate on December 7, is expected to be signed into law by President Obama. It includes medical research and mental health provisions, and also authorizes \$1 billion for opioid abuse prevention efforts. The first half of that spending is appropriated in the CR that will fund the government through April 28. HAC's recent conference included USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack and National Rural Health Association CEO Alan Morgan speaking on the opioid addiction crisis in rural areas, and discussion papers they wrote are available online.

President-elect Trump selects Dr. Ben Carson as HUD Secretary. Nominees for other HUD posts and for USDA have not yet been announced.

Materials from HAC 2016 Rural Housing Conference posted online. Workshop presentations, discussion papers, and more are available at <https://event.crowdcompass.com/buildingrural>. To access workshop materials, click the Schedule icon.

Household Water Well System Grants available. The Rural Utilities Service will make grants to nonprofits to establish lending programs for homeowners to borrow up to \$11,000 to construct or repair household water wells for existing homes. Grantees are encouraged to focus on high-poverty areas; areas with inadequate systems, particularly colonias or underserved trust areas; and places impacted by severe drought. Apply by February 6, 2017. For more information contact Derek Jones, RUS, 202-720-9640.

RUS to make water/wastewater grants for loan funds. Nonprofits that will lend the funds to entities eligible for RUS's water, waste disposal, and wastewater loan and grant programs may apply by February 6, 2017. Grantees are encouraged to direct loans to the smallest communities with the lowest incomes and to areas needing plumbing and modern sewage disposal systems (such as colonias and underserved trust lands), and to emphasize energy- and water-efficient components. Obtain application guides and materials online or from Lisa Chesnel, RUS, 202-720-0499.

Final public housing smoke-free rule published. PHAs administering public housing must implement a smoke-free policy by August 2018. PHAs must ban the use of prohibited tobacco products and waterpipes in all public housing living units, public housing indoor common areas, PHA administrative office buildings, and outdoor areas up to 25 feet from the buildings. For more information, contact Leroy Ferguson, HUD, 202-402-2411.

Change proposed for HOME commitment requirement. An interim final rule would allow participating jurisdictions to identify the grant year of funds they are using, rather than HUD's system automatically assuming they are using their oldest funds, in order to reduce loss of funds considered not to have been committed within 24 months. Comments are due January 3, 2017. For information contact Virginia Sardone, HUD, 202-708-2684.

IHBG program allocation formula revised. HUD's final rule on Indian Housing Block Grant allocations reflects consensus decisions reached by HUD and tribal representatives. For information contact Heidi J. Frechette, HUD, 202-401-7914.

HUD explains implementation of income limit for public housing. The 2016 Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act added an income limit to the public housing program. Comments are due December 29 on HUD's proposal to implement the change. Contact HUD staff, HOTMAquestions@hud.gov.

USDA RD marketing flyers available. Rural housing groups are welcome to print and use the brochures about [housing programs](#) and [other assistance](#).

Rural economies improved in 2015. The 2016 edition of [Rural America at a Glance](#), published by USDA's Economic Research Service, reports that rural unemployment continued to decline in 2015, falling close to levels last seen before the Great Recession, as employment continued to grow. After declining for several years, rural population stabilized. Median annual earnings rose in rural areas and poverty fell markedly in 2015, as in urban areas; the rise in earnings occurred across most major industry sectors.

45 Years. 45 Stories. celebrates HAC anniversary. A collection of 45 brief stories celebrates HAC's 45th anniversary, illustrating decades of efforts and accomplishments. The report is available on [HAC's website](#) (it is a large document and takes time to open).

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