

Congress sworn in, may consider appropriations before stimulus. The new 111th Congress took office on January 6, and President-elect Obama will be inaugurated on January 20. Reports are that Congress may finish a 2009 omnibus appropriations bill (including USDA and HUD funding) in January, but that a very large economic stimulus package may take up to six weeks. The stimulus bill may also have substantial housing funds. Rep. Rubén Hinojosa (D-Texas), Chair of the Congressional Rural Housing Caucus, is leading efforts to include \$750 million in budget authority (the program level would be higher) for USDA rural housing programs.

President-elect Obama announces choices for USDA and HUD secretaries. For more information about former Iowa Governor Tom Vilsack (USDA) and New York City housing commissioner Shaun Donovan (HUD), visit http://www.ruralhome.org/infoAnnouncements_2008CabinetAppts.php.

HUD releases general NOFA information, will issue separate program NOFAs this year. NOFAs for specific programs will be published between January and June. See *Federal Register*, 12/29/08, or http://www.ruralhome.org/infoAnnouncements_2009HUDNOFAs.php. Contact HUD, 202-708-0667.

RD sets guidelines on lender charges and fees for Section 502 guaranteed borrowers. See Administrative Notice 4407 (December 3, 2008), available at http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/regs/an_list.html or from RD offices. Contact David Chaput, RD, 202-720-1452, david.chaput@wdc.usda.gov.

HUD proposes new single-family home sale program. Comments are due February 20 on a proposed rule implementing a Sale of HUD-Owned Single Family Assets in Revitalization Areas program. "Preferred purchasers" are nonprofits, local governments, states, and tribes; for-profits are also eligible. See *Federal Register*, 12/22/08, or <http://www.regulations.gov>. Contact Vance T. Morris, HUD, 202-708-1672.

HOPE for Homeowners program widens. HUD is implementing provisions of the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act, signed into law October 3, expanding the number of eligible borrowers and participating lenders and servicers. Comments are due March 9. See *Federal Register*, 1/7/09, or <http://www.regulations.gov>. Contact Emmanuel Yeow, HUD, 202-708-3600.

Revised CRA Qs and As published. The federal agencies that oversee lenders subject to the Community Reinvestment Act have adopted new questions and answers to help interpret CRA. Comments are due March 9 on new and revised topics including provision of affordable housing targeted to low- or moderate-income residents. See *Federal Register*, 1/6/09, or <http://www.regulations.gov>. Contact Karen Tucker, OCC, 202-874-4428.

Formaldehyde comments sought. The Environmental Protection Agency requests input by February 2 as it decides whether to issue rules on emissions in pressed wood products. EPA's website says it will work closely with HUD on issues related to manufactured housing. See *Federal Register*, 12/3/08, or <http://www.epa.gov/opptintr/chemtest/formaldehyde/index.htm>. Contact Colby Linter, EPA, TSCA-Hotline@epa.gov, 202-564-1264.

H-2A farmworker rules changed. A final Department of Labor rule alters the process for employer permission to hire H-2A workers and enhances enforcement of employers' contractual obligations. See *Federal Register*, 12/18/08, or <http://www.foreignlaborcert.doleta.gov/>. Contact William L. Carlson, DOL, 202-693-3010.

Mortgage licensing model statute available. The Secure and Fair Enforcement (SAFE) Mortgage Licensing Act, enacted as part of the Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008, requires states to adopt mortgage licensing requirements that meet minimum standards. Model legislation for states is available at <http://www.hud.gov/offices/hsg/sfh/reguprog.cfm>. Contact William Matchneer, HUD, 202-708-6401.

RD sets unified guarantee platform for non-housing programs. An interim rule replacing current loan guarantee regulations for community facility, water and waste, business and industry, and energy programs is effective January 16. Comments are due February 17. See *Federal Register*, 12/17/08, or <http://www.regulations.gov>. Contact Michael Foore, RD, Michael.Foore@wdc.usda.gov, 202-690-4730.

Cushing Niles Dolbeare Media Awards entries sought. Print journalists who make a dedicated effort to inform the public about the inequities in housing can be nominated by February 16 for the National Low Income Housing Coalition's awards. Visit <http://www.nlihc.org/template/page.cfm?id=135> or contact Taylor Materio, NLIHC, taylor@nlihc.org, 202-662-1530 ext. 227.

Rural housing platform posted on HAC's website. Eleven one-page issue papers, developed with input from attendees at the National Rural Housing Conference 2008, are posted at <http://www.ruralhome.org/infoBlog.php>. Comments can be submitted to Leslie Strauss, HAC, leslie@ruralhome.org, 202-842-8600.