



GOVERNMENT FUNDED THROUGH APRIL 8. Negotiations continue on federal funding for the remainder of fiscal year 2011 after the current Continuing Resolution ends on April 8.

CONGRESS PUSHES BACK ON RURAL HOUSING CUTS. Two senior members of Congress strongly criticized the Obama Administration's proposed USDA rural housing cuts at a March 31 hearing of the House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee. Following testimony from USDA Under Secretary Dallas Tonsager, Ranking Member Sam Farr (D-California) and former Subcommittee Chair Rosa DeLauro (D-Connecticut) questioned how RD will be able to serve low-income rural people if the Section 502 direct loan, 523 self-help, and 504 loan programs are severely cut or eliminated. Farr pointed out that at least 300 families in his district, including two small town mayors, have built self-help homes. DeLauro said, "We see you going out of this business, and that is very troublesome to us." Both also challenged the notion that Section 502 guaranteed loans could take up the slack, and opposed moving USDA housing programs to HUD. No subcommittee members spoke in favor of the proposed cuts. Prepared statements by Tonsager and housing administrator Tammye Treviño are posted at <http://appropriations.house.gov> (go to the Agriculture Subcommittee page and click "Related Documents"). Written testimony from others will be accepted until April 14. Submission instructions are at <http://appropriations.house.gov>, or call staff, 202-225-2638.

GAO SUGGESTS IMPROVEMENTS IN FARM LABOR HOUSING PROGRAM. The Government Accountability Office examined demand for the Section 514/516 program, RD's oversight processes, and existing properties' financial status. *Rural Housing Service: Opportunities Exist to Strengthen Farm Labor Housing Program Management and Oversight* (GAO-11-329) is available free at <http://www.gao.gov> or for a fee from GAO, 866-801-7077.

DONATED MANUFACTURED HOMES FOR NATIVE AMERICANS ELIGIBLE FOR SECTION 502 LOANS. HUD is transferring free homes, donated by FEMA, to tribes. Section 502 loans can be used to cover transportation and set-up costs. An Unnumbered Letter dated March 14, 2011 reminds RD offices of requirements for manufactured homes and is available at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/SupportDocuments/ulmarch11.pdf> or from RD offices.

RD ENCOURAGES LOCAL OFFICES TO PARTNER FOR REPLACEMENT OF OLD MOBILE HOMES. Local offices are urged to support efforts by nonprofits and government entities to provide new manufactured housing to replace mobile homes built before the HUD Code came into effect in 1976. See Unnumbered Letter (March 15, 2011), available at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/SupportDocuments/ulmarch11.pdf> or from RD offices. Contact Christopher Ketner, RD, 202-690-1530, christopher.ketner@wdc.usda.gov.

USDA SECRETARY APPOINTS MINORITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE. The Minority Farmer Advisory Committee will help implement outreach and assistance efforts to socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, promote their participation in USDA programs, and support civil rights activities within the department. USDA's press release is at <http://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/USDAOC-52d34>.

OMB REQUESTS COMMENTS ON COSTS AND BENEFITS OF REGULATIONS. *Draft 2011 Report to Congress on the Benefits and Costs of Federal Regulations and Unfunded Mandates on State, Local, and Tribal Entities* is available for review at http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/inforeg_regpol_reports_congress/. Comments are particularly requested on how to improve retrospective analysis of existing rules, and are due May 16. See *Federal Register*, 4/1/11. Contact OMB, 202-395-3741.

RENTAL HOUSING DATA PROFILES FOR CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS UPDATED. The National Low Income Housing Coalition has added new data to provide snapshots of housing needs in each congressional district and state. The profiles include renter cost burden levels, overcrowding and incomplete plumbing rates, and more. Visit http://www.nlihc.org/detail/article.cfm?article_id=3810&id=61.

RURAL VOICES FEATURES SELF-HELP SUCCESSES. A special edition of HAC's quarterly magazine describes the benefits of USDA's Section 523 self-help housing program coupled with Section 502 direct mortgages. Current and past issues of *Rural Voices* are free at <http://www.ruralhome.org>. One print subscription per organization is free from Dan Stern, HAC, 202-842-8600, dan@ruralhome.org.

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