



SEQUESTRATION, FUNDING CUTS TO IMPACT RURAL RENTAL ASSISTANCE AND RD EMPLOYEES. FY13 was discussed at two hearings on USDA's FY14 budget request held in April by the House Appropriations Committee's Agriculture Subcommittee. On April 16, USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack said that FY13 funding will fall short for 15,000 RA households while the \$1.015 billion requested by the Administration would allow renewal of all expiring contracts in FY14. In response to questioning, he also stated that RD and Farm Service Agency employees could be furloughed for up to ten days. On April 24, responding to a question, Acting Under Secretary for RD Doug O'Brien said the FY14 budget did not include enough RA funding to make up for the FY13 shortfall. Rep. Sam Farr (D-CA) asked why USDA does not work through housing authorities in places where they exist, and expressed frustration at delays in issuing regulations that would allow nonprofits to package loan applications.

REP. MEL WATT NOMINATED TO HEAD FHFA. On May 1 President Obama nominated Rep. Melvin Watt (D-NC) as director of the Federal Housing Finance Agency. Watt has been a member of Congress since 1992 and a member of the Financial Services Committee, which oversees housing programs.

SENATE BILL WOULD CONTINUE AREA ELIGIBILITY FOR RURAL HOUSING PROGRAMS. S. 766, introduced April 18 by Sen. Tim Johnson (D-SD), is similar to H.R. 858, which was introduced February 27 (see HAC News, 3/6/13) by Rep. Jeff Fortenberry (R-NE). Both would revise the rural housing programs' definition of "rural" to extend grandfathering of currently eligible places through the 2020 Census. The House bill would retain current law ending grandfathering if a place reaches 25,000 population; the Senate bill would increase that limit to 35,000.

HUD TO CLOSE AND CONSOLIDATE SOME FIELD OFFICES. Sixteen of HUD's 80 field offices will close by early FY14, leaving at least one HUD office in each state. HUD's Office of Multifamily Housing Programs will consolidate 50 offices into five Multifamily Hubs and five satellite offices by the end of 2015. Positions and workloads will be changed as well. Affected employees will be offered early retirements, buyouts, or relocation.

CFPB PROPOSES AMENDMENTS TO SOME FINAL MORTGAGE RULES. On May 2 the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau will propose changes to Real Estate Settlement Procedure Act and Truth In Lending Act regulations finalized in January 2013. The amendments relate to state laws, the small servicer exemption from certain servicing rules, and Qualified Mortgages. Comments will be due in 30 days. Contact Whitney Patross, CFPB, 202-435-7700.

FAIR HOUSING GUIDANCE ADDRESSES DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION, ASSISTANCE ANIMALS. The Departments of Justice and HUD have released new guidance on the Fair Housing Act's requirements for design and construction of multifamily housing. HUD also issued a notice reaffirming that housing providers must make reasonable accommodations for people with assistance animals. Contacting HUD's Fair Housing Office, 800-669-9777.

USDA RD, OTHERS WILL CONTINUE EFFORTS TO ADDRESS INDIAN COUNTRY WATER/WASTEWATER NEEDS. A new Memorandum of Understanding among EPA, HHS, HUD, the Department of the Interior, and USDA agrees to continue federal coordination in delivering water infrastructure, wastewater infrastructure and solid waste management services to tribal communities. Contact Jacki Ponti, USDA, 202-690-2670.

OTLALA SIOUX "TAKE THE RESERVATION TO WASHINGTON." In April, the Trail of Hope for Indian Housing initiative trucked the façade of an aging, overcrowded house from Pine Ridge, SD to Washington, DC and held a rally near the U.S. Capitol to show Congress the state of Indian housing in tribal communities.

MARKET IMPACT OF CHANGING MORTGAGE INTEREST DEDUCTION NOT CLEAR, UI REPORTS. "How Would Reforming the Mortgage Interest Deduction Affect the Housing Market?" summarizes past research and a roundtable hosted by the Urban Institute. It concludes that "the best available evidence predicts far less dire effects [than some forecasts anticipate], and some reforms to the MID could actually bolster the housing market recovery." UI plans to conduct additional research.

2013 ADVOCATES' GUIDE TO HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT POLICY AVAILABLE.

The National Low Income Housing Coalition's annual guide covers programs and policies and provides advocacy tools. It is [free online](#) or can be ordered from Christina Sin, NLIHC, christina@nlihc.org, 202-662-1530 ext. 224.

HAC OFFERS WEBINAR ON HOME REPAIR FOR RURAL SENIORS. Save the date! *Aging in Place* will be held on June 19 at 3:00 Eastern time. Topics will include using the USDA Section 504 grant program and leveraging weatherization dollars. Details and registration information will be posted at www.ruralhome.org when available. Contact Janice Clark, HAC, janice@ruralhome.org.

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