



**FIRST HEARING FOR FY16 HOUSING FUNDING HELD.** On February 25, HUD Secretary Julián Castro testified before the House Appropriations Committee's Transportation-HUD Subcommittee about the Administration's FY16 budget request (see HAC News, 2/4/15).

Rep. David Valadao (R-CA) asked how much of HUD's funding goes to rural places and how HUD can serve rural America. Castro responded with the proportions of CDBG and HOME dollars used in rural areas. Rep. Henry Cuellar (D-TX) asked about HUD activities in the colonias. Castro described the budget request to increase the CDBG setaside for colonias to 15% from the current 10%. The subcommittee will hold another hearing on HUD funding for housing and one for community development. The House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee has scheduled a March 18 hearing on USDA Rural Development, including the rural housing programs.

**USDA OFFERS RURAL VOUCHERS.** Section 542 vouchers are for tenants of RD-financed Section 515 properties where the RD loan has been prepaid or foreclosed on after September 30, 2005. A notice will be published in the March 9 Federal Register. Contact an RD office or Stephanie B.M. White, RD, 202-720-1615.

**SECTION 502 GUARANTEE RULE CHANGES OFFERED.** USDA RD proposes to amend its regulations for the single-family guaranteed loan program on the subjects of lender indemnification, principal reduction, refinancing, and qualified mortgage requirements. Comments are due May 4. Contact Lilian Lipton, USDA, 202-260-8012.

**RD SETS NATIONAL SQUARE FOOTAGE FOR MODEST HOUSING.** In recent years, regional guidelines have been used for square footage, which is one factor in determining what homes are "modest" and eligible for the Section 502 direct and 504 programs. An Unnumbered Letter dated March 3, 2015 sets a nationwide guideline at 1,800 square feet. State Directors can approve exceptions. Contact Chris Ketner, RD, 202-690-1530.

**SUPPORTIVE SERVICES FOR VETERAN FAMILIES REGULATIONS COMPLETED.** The VA issued final regulations for the program, which makes grants to entities that provide supportive services to very low-income veterans and families who are at risk for becoming homeless or who have recently become homeless. Contact John Kuhn, 877-737-0111 (toll-free).

**HUD ISSUES GUIDANCE ON SERVICE TO LGBT AND TRANSGENDER INDIVIDUALS.** Notice H 2015-01 reminds stakeholders that regulations prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identify, or marital status apply to housing financed or insured by HUD. To ask questions about this notice, contact the FHA Resource Center, 800-CALLFHA (800-225-5342). Notice CPD-15-02 addresses appropriate placement for transgender persons in single-sex emergency shelters and other facilities, telling providers they should generally place individuals in shelters serving the gender with which they identify. Submit questions on this notice online.

**STATE CDBG PROGRAM GUIDE UPDATED.** Guide to National Objectives and Eligible Activities for State CDBG Programs, published by HUD, describes and provides examples of eligible activities and details the process for selecting activities that properly address a national objective.

**HUD COMPARES HOUSING TRUST FUND AND HOME.** A brief table highlights the key differences in the programs.

**SECTION 8 GUIDANCE COVERS DAVIS-BACON'S APPLICABILITY TO EXISTING HOUSING.** In the March 9 Federal Register HUD will publish information supplementing its rules on applying the Davis-Bacon Act's wage requirements to existing housing involved in the Section 8 project-based voucher program. Contact Becky Primeaux, HUD, 202-708-2815.

**STUDY SHOWS HOW ENERGY EFFICIENCY IN RENTAL HOUSING HELPS AFFORDABILITY.** A report on research conducted for Housing Virginia by Virginia Tech's Center for Housing Research states that residents of energy-efficient Low Income Housing Tax Credit developments, both urban and rural, saved an average of \$54 a month on electricity bills, and those apartments outperformed new standard construction by over 40% with respect to energy consumption.

**"HOW HOUSING MATTERS" WEBSITE LAUNCHED.** The site, funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and created by the Urban Land Institute Terwilliger Center for Housing, is intended to be

“the go-to place for the most rigorous research and practical information on how housing can contribute to better educational opportunities and outcomes for children; stronger economic foundations for families and communities; healthier people and neighborhoods.”

**INTERACTIVE MAP SHOWS RACIAL/ETHNIC DIVERSITY BY AGE FOR COUNTIES.** A Brookings Institution [online map](#) illustrates the racial composition of different age groups for each county and metropolitan area. Brookings notes that youth are considerably more diverse than elders. Detailed data are also provided.

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