

HAC NEWS GOING FULLY DIGITAL. Beginning in 2016, the print version of the *HAC News* will no longer be available. The *News* will still be published every two weeks, will still provide the same concise updates on issues important to rural housers, and will still be free. Back issues will continue to be available online at <http://www.ruralhome.org>.

Congress working on FY16 funding measures. Before the current continuing resolution expires on December 11 (see [HAC News, 9/30/15](#)), Congress is likely to pass an omnibus appropriation bill that includes most or all of the 12 federal spending bills for FY16. Passage may be stalled by attempts to add policy riders relating to refugees, health care, and other topics. If more negotiation time is needed, another CR may be used to extend spending to December 18 rather than shutting down the government. At press time, no details are available on the omnibus's provisions related to USDA rural housing. In a Transportation-HUD bill brought to the Senate floor November 18, additional funds made available by the budget agreement (see [HAC News, 10/28/15](#)) were used to raise HOME funding to \$900 million and CDBG to \$3 billion, rather than the earlier \$66 million and \$2.9 billion (see [HAC News, 6/25/15](#)), though other HUD programs did not receive increases. The Senate did not vote on that bill because of disagreements on policy riders, but the higher numbers are likely to appear in a final bill.

Tax extender negotiations include LIHTC and EITC. This month Congress is expected to renew some tax-related programs that expired last December, including the Low Income Housing Tax Credit, New Markets Tax Credit, Earned Income Tax Credit, and others. This retroactive renewal is needed to make these provisions effective for 2015.

HUD's Choice Neighborhoods NOFA introduces Planning and Action Grants. The deadline is February 16, 2016 for PHAs, local governments, tribal entities, and nonprofits to request FY15 and FY16 [Choice Neighborhoods](#) Planning Grants or Planning and Action Grants. The program is intended to help communities with severely distressed public or HUD-assisted housing in developing successful neighborhood transformation plans and building the support necessary for plans to be successfully implemented. Contact HUD staff, ChoiceNeighborhoods@hud.gov.

HUD offers equal access rule for transgender persons. A [proposed regulation](#) would require entities receiving funds from many HUD programs (but not public or Indian housing) and owners and managers of facilities and services to assist transgender persons in accordance with their gender identities. Providers could ask about sexual orientation or gender identity, but could not discriminate on those bases. [Comments](#) are due January 19, 2016. Contact Norm Suchar, HUD, 202-708-4300.

New HAC resources offer data on veterans nationwide. Information about veterans' economic and housing characteristics for every state and county is available at www.veteransdata.info. The site, developed by the Housing Assistance Council with support from [JPMorgan Chase & Co.](#), provides approximately 420 veteran-specific data indicators and over 650,000 data points. Also available on the site are fact sheets for each state, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. providing details on the veterans' population including proportion, prevalence by county, median income, poverty levels, unemployment rate, disability, median home value, housing problems, homelessness, and other factors.

Housing communications information available. A [recent brief](#) from the National Housing Conference offers "seven effective strategies for countering community opposition" to affordable housing development. NHC has also published a [Veteran's Housing Communications Toolkit](#) offering ways of communicating about veterans' housing needs and solutions with three audiences: community members, policy makers, and veterans themselves.

RDLN auction online through December 13. Proceeds from the [Rural Development Leadership Network's](#) annual [fundraising auction](#) support the organization's work for social justice, community development, and leadership development in low-income rural communities in the U.S. Items include jewelry, books, vacations, and more.

USDA updates Rural America at a Glance. The 2015 version of this [data summary](#) reports that the pace of rural employment growth increased in 2014, although rural employment remains below pre-recession levels. Rural areas continue to experience population loss, higher poverty rates, and lower educational attainment than urban areas.

DDAs and QCTs set for 2016. The newly designated Difficult Development Areas and Qualified Census Tracts for the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program are effective July 1, 2016, rather than January 1 as in the past. For the first time the metro area DDA designations use Small Area Fair Market Rents, rather than metro-area FMRs. Contact Michael K. Hollar, HUD, 202-402-5878.

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