

Federal cuts continue downward spiral on housing assistance

COMPILED BY THE WESTERN REGIONAL ADVOCACY PROJECT

The Western Regional Advocacy Project (WRAP) just released a fact sheet outlining projected cuts to homeless and housing dollars at the Federal level.

The purpose of the fact sheet, according to the group, is to provide a historical basis for understanding the affordable housing cuts in Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that once again were included in the Federal Congressional Budget process.

"A half-billion or even a billion dollar cut here and there may not sound so severe when looked at in isolation, given the size of the overall budget," says Paul Boden with WRAP. "But when looking at the 38-year-cycle of draconian cuts to our nation's affordable housing programs and the direct correlation of how this created and perpetuates homelessness, we can better understand and hopefully fight against these continued attacks on the human right to housing."

History of Slashing HUD Budget

1978 to 1983: HUD budget authority shrank from \$83 billion to little more than \$18 billion (in 2004 constant dollars) and shelters opened throughout the United States.

1995 to 2011: During this time, 290,588 existing units of public housing and 360,000 Section 8 units have been lost. With another 7,107 approved for demolition/disposition since March of this year. During this time, 830,000 new jail and prison cells have been created.

1996 to 2011: HUD funding for new public housing units – the safety net for the poorest among us – has been zero since 1996.

2008: Homeowner tax breaks cost the US Treasury approximately \$144 billion, with 75% of this expenditure benefiting homeowners earning more than \$100,000 a year, while total funding in all federal low-income housing assistance programs was \$46 billion – a difference of \$98 billion.

2012 cuts to HUD budget include:

■ HUD's budget is \$37.5 billion, a decrease of \$3.6 billion from 2011 budget of \$41.1 billion (in today's dollars).

■ Tenant based Section 8 funding was level funded at \$18.9 billion. The press release from committee states "tenants currently in housing will not lose housing"

■ Public housing expected operating funds in 2012 are \$3.96 billion. This represents a decrease of \$760 million in just the past three years (2010 funds of \$4.7 billion and 2011 funds of \$4.6 billion).

■ Capital available to perform maintenance in 2012 is \$1.875 billion. This represents a decrease of \$625 million in just the past three years (2010 capital funds of \$2.5 billion and 2011 capital funds of \$2.04 billion)

■ Currently, HUD's public housing maintenance needs are estimated at \$20-\$30 billion. Instead of funding this backlog Congress has passed the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD), which authorizes the conversion of up to 60,000 public housing and Mod Rehab units to private or non-profit owned project-based Section 8 units. However, the bill provides no new funding; instead, it directs HUD to use existing resources and fund increased Section 8 costs through reductions in public housing operating and capital funds directly related to the demonstration units.

■ Section 202, funding for senior housing, is \$374 million, a harsh decrease of \$461 million since only 2010 (\$825 million)

2012: Section 811 funding for disabled people increased in 2012 to \$165 million from \$149 million in 2011.

■ HOPWA (Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS) was cut \$2 million in 2012 to \$332 million following a \$3 million cut in 2010.

■ CDBG (Community Development Block Grants) were cut to \$2.9 billion in 2012 – another consistent decrease from 2010 levels of \$3.9 million and \$3.3 million in 2011.

"The recent corporate bailout cost taxpayers over \$800 billion – a sum that surpasses the entirety of funding allocated for homeless assistance and affordable housing over the last three decades," says Boden.

Street Roots will be following up and reporting on how cuts will affect Portland and the larger region.

The Western Regional Advocacy Project is a consortium of organizations along the West Coast, including Street Roots and Sisters of the Road in Portland.

For more about WRAP visit www.wraphome.com.

The Occupy Homeless Movement

From the artist, Ronnie Goodman: "The print I call The Occupy Homeless Movement is about the persecution of being homeless. It's also about my life having to deal with rats and bedbugs that you may encounter being homeless. But also, I believe that the musicians that I put in give hope. They represent the rhythm of life."

The Occupy movement was always there in the print even though I started the print before the movement. In it you see the struggle of the people – the rich people against the little people and the little people are tired of getting stepped on. But I was working on this and the Occupy movement came and it gave a voice and a name to what I was doing. Occupy speaks not only to homeless people but it gives voice to everyone whatever they're going through, foreclosure, job loss, et cetera. It's the voice of the people.

The bridges in the print are ironic because people say, 'at least I'm not sleeping under a bridge.' And I thought I'll never be there, too. But, here I am, sleeping under a bridge. So I'm using this image of a homeless guy being crucified on a bridge. It's like he is both dying because of the difficulties he faces but he is also condemned by society. And the UPS truck, that is just there because those are the guys that wake me up every morning when they come to work."

Source: The Western Regional Advocacy Project

