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The National American Indian Housing Council is a not-for-profit organization representing tribes and tribal housing organizations on affordable housing, mortgage lending, finance, and economic development issues.

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The Federal Monitor

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News of Issues Affecting Tribes and Tribal Housing Programs

Congress To Act on Budget Committee Proposals

The full Senate and House are expected to consider this week resolutions approved by their respective budget committees last week. In a letter to Judd Gregg (R-NH), Senate Budget Committee Chairman, and Kent Conrad (D-ND) Budget Committee Ranking Member, the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs Chairman and Ranking Member requested funding for programs that are meeting American Indians' and Alaska Natives' goals of improving their lives. Indian Affairs Chairman John McCain (R-AZ) and Ranking Member Byron Dorgan (D-ND) stated the committee objected to proposed cuts to the Native American Housing Block Grant (NAHBG) and Indian Community Development Block Grant (ICDGB) programs and urged NAHBG to be funded at the FY 2005 level, adjusting for inflation. They also urged ICDGB be funded separately at the FY 2005 level at \$69 million, and supported the proposed increase for the Title VI Loan Guarantee Program. "Despite the still deplorable state of Indian housing and the success of the NAHASDA program in ameliorating the problem, the budget request significantly cuts the block grant program from \$627 million in FY 2005 to \$582 million in FY 2006," McCain and Dorgan wrote in the February letter.

On the House side, the Financial Services Committee in their Views and Estimates noted the President's proposal makes cuts to a number of housing programs, including Native American housing. In a House Financial Services hearing with HUD Secretary Alphonso Jackson on March 2, Rep. Jim Matheson (R-UT) said he was concerned about the reduction in funding for Native American Housing Block Grants after a hearing on Native American Housing held last year on the Navajo Reservation.

"Few locations in all of the United States demonstrate the housing needs that this and other American Indian Reservations do. Following that hearing, we have made bi-partisan commitments to improving the assistance available for Native American Housing programs," Matheson said. "I am concerned that cuts to this program and the Indian Community Development Block Grants set-aside under CDBG, resulting in a 16% reduction in Indian housing funds, do little to address the significant housing needs we desire to alleviate."

The March 2 hearing, however, was dominated by the majority of Financial Services Committee Members, including Barney Frank (D-MA), and Maxine Waters (D-CA), who opposed the President's proposal to move the Community Development Block Grant Program under the Commerce Department.

"The FY 2006 HUD budget accelerates a four-year effort by the Bush Administration to dismantle critical HUD programs, to make deep funding cuts in these programs, and rearetfullv. to target these cuts to our most vulnerable low-

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income families, seniors, and disabled persons,” stated several committee members, including Reps. Frank and Waters, in a House Financial Services addendum on the budget.

New Appropriations Subcommittees Structure

The Senate and House appropriations committees have re-organized their respective subcommittees to further streamline the appropriations process. Senators have disbanded the VA/HUD Subcommittee and have created the Transportation, Treasury, the Judiciary and Housing and Urban Development Subcommittee, which is chaired by Sen. Christopher “Kit” Bond (R-MO). Senators created the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Subcommittee, chaired by Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX) to handle veterans’ issues. Representatives in the House have also disbanded the VA/HUD Subcommittee and created the Transportation, Treasury and Housing Subcommittee, which is chaired by Rep. Joseph Knollenberg (R-MI). Veterans’ issues will be handled by the new Military Quality-of-Life and Veterans Affairs, which is chaired by Rep. James Walsh (R-NY).

Bills To Amend Housing Codes Re-Introduced

Rep. Rick Renzi (R-AZ) has re-introduced a bill to make a technical correction to the provision for program income in the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 1996 (NAHASDA). The Native American Housing Enhancement Act of 2005 or H.R. 797, co-sponsored by Rep. Jim Matheson (D-UT), will also allow tribes the ability to exercise Indian preference in USDA housing programs, and reinstate tribal eligibility for HUD YouthBuild funds. Sens. Tim Johnson (D-SD) and Michael Enzi (R-WY) have re-introduced a companion bill, S. 475, in the Senate.

Nations’ Governors Support Indian Housing

The National Governors’ Association has recently approved policy to support Indian block grant programs for the first time in its history. During its 2005 Winter Meeting in Washington, D.C., the association adopted an Affordable Housing Policy, which included the following language:

“The Governors support continued funding with maximum flexibility of the Indian Housing Block Grant to tribes and tribally-designated housing entities.”

Governors, recognizing the need for rural housing in their states, also adopted the following rural housing policy:

“Governors strongly support continued effective federal programs and adequate funding to address the affordable housing and community development needs of rural America.”

Seeking Email Addresses for Federal Monitor

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