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NAIHC Chairman Testifies On Proposed Indian Housing Budget Cuts at Senate Committee on Indian Affairs Oversight Hearing

Budget cut would be the largest decrease since 1996

WASHINGTON—February 25, 2010—Marty Shuravloff, Chairman of the National American Indian Housing Council (NAIHC), the only national Indian organization solely advocating on behalf of tribal housing issues, testified on the proposed budget cuts to Indian housing today before the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs Oversight Hearing to Examine Tribal Programs and Initiatives Proposed in the President's Fiscal Year 2011 Budget Request.

President Barack Obama's Budget Request proposes \$572.2 million for the Indian Housing Block Grant (IHBG), a decrease of \$120 million (-17 percent) from the FY 2010 funding level. At the same time, the Department of Housing and Urban Development's overall budget was reduced by only five percent.

“Should Congress accept the President's budget proposal, it would be the lowest, single-year funding level since NAHASDA was enacted in 1996,” said Chairman Shuravloff. “The NAIHC strongly urges Congress to not only appropriate funds above the President's Budget Request, but to fund the IHBG at \$875 million due to the increasing costs for housing development, energy efficiency initiatives, and other inflationary factors.”

Tribes received \$700 million for the IHBG in the FY 2010 Budget and \$500 from the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act*.

“While the NAIHC and its members are aware of and appreciate the large investments made in Indian housing, we are disappointed that the current request fails to continue the positive budget trajectory of recent years,” Shuravloff said. “Since the President's Budget Request has been released, many of our members have expressed to us their deep concern. They believe this budget impacts not only housing, but also the very hope for self-sustaining economies in Indian Country. Reduced funding would result in the loss of jobs for our people, the deterioration of existing housing units, and the curtailment of many housing projects that are currently under development.

President Obama submitted to Congress a \$3.8 trillion budget request, which proposes a 3-year freeze on non-defense, domestic discretionary spending. This category includes the bulk of programs and services for tribal communities, in particular Indian housing programs.

As for other Indian housing programs, the budget request includes \$2 million for the Title VI Loan Guarantee program and \$9 million for the Section 184 program. The budget request includes \$64 million for the Indian Community Development Block Grant, which is available to federally recognized tribes and Alaska Native villages on a competitive basis. The budget request proposes \$12 million for the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Housing Improvement Program, but zeroes out the Department of Veterans Affairs Native American housing loan program, which provides direct loans to Indian veterans. The President's funding requests \$10 million for the Native Hawaiian Housing Block Grant, but the budget includes no funding for the Section 184A program in Hawaii.

Two panels testified at today's hearing. Panel One speakers included: Tom Perrelli, Associate Attorney General, U.S. Department of Justice; Larry EchoHawk, Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, U.S. Department of the Interior; and Yvette Roubideaux, Director of the Indian Health Services, U.S. Health and Human Services. Panel Two witnesses included: Jefferson Keel, President of the National Congress of American Indians; Patricia Whitefoot, President of the National Indian Education Association; and NAIHC Chairman Marty Shuravloff.

For more information regarding the Indian housing budget and appropriations, please contact NAIHC Executive Director Mellor C. Willie at 202-789-1754 or mwillie@naihc.net.

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The National American Indian Housing Council (NAIHC) was founded in 1974 as a 501(c)(3) corporation. NAIHC is the only national organization representing housing interests of Native people who reside in Indian communities, Alaska Native Villages, and on native Hawaiian Home Lands.