

NAHT's Save Our Homes Platform for the 2008 Elections

April 25, 2008

More than 400,000 units of affordable housing have been lost since 1996, and 500,000 of the remaining 1.7 million units of privately-owned, HUD-assisted multifamily housing are at risk due to unrestricted owner choices to opt out of federal programs and convert to market rents. As many as 300,000 families are at immediate risk of displacement due to a \$2.4 billion shortfall in project-based funding in FY 2008 if HUD miscalculates and cuts off funds, forcing tenants to pay overnight rent increases several times previous levels.

The National Alliance of HUD Tenants (NAHT) seeks commitments from Presidential and Congressional candidates in 2008 to ensure that our homes will be saved as affordable housing. In addition, NAHT seeks to restore HUD's dialogue with organized tenant groups to serve as HUD's "Eyes and Ears" in overseeing the public's multibillion dollar investment in affordable housing.

1. Fully fund Section 8 and other HUD programs.

Do you support full funding for annual renewals of project-based Section 8 contracts, including a Special or Emergency Supplemental Appropriation of \$2.4 billion during FY 2008? Will you support measures to protect tenants and owners in the event HUD fails to meet its contract obligations? Do you support an additional \$6.5 billion to fully fund HUD programs in FY 2009? Will you support multiple year appropriations for Section 8 to secure our homes?

2. Adopt legislation to Save At-Risk HUD Multifamily Housing.

Will you support a National Right to Purchase for tenant and nonprofit organizations to preserve at risk HUD housing as affordable housing for lower income families, with a maximum of resident-controlled ownership? Will you support the Mark to Market Reform Act, comprehensive Preservation legislation, and the National Housing Trust Fund to preserve and build affordable housing?

3. Support rent reform.

Will you support the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act? Will you support further reductions in rent burdens for HUD subsidized tenants by increasing deductions, using net rather than gross income as the basis for rent calculations, and/or restoring the Nixon era rent standard of 25% of income for moderate income families and 15% for very low income or large families?

4. Save and improve substandard HUD multifamily housing.

Will you maximize preservation and improvement of substandard HUD multifamily housing and the transfer of these buildings to tenant-endorsed or controlled nonprofit ownership? Will you take strong enforcement action against HUD landlords who fail to maintain their properties?

5. Empower tenants as partners with HUD.

Will you support legislation to empower tenants as partners with HUD, by allowing HUD and tenant rent withholding in substandard housing, establishing tenants as third-party beneficiaries in HUD contracts, and providing tenants with access to project budgets, inspection reports, opt out notices, and ownership information?

6. Restore tenant dialogue with HUD.

Will you restore HUD's "Eyes and Ears" dialogue with NAHT tenant groups, including regular regional and national meetings with NAHT? Will you support funding through HUD and the Corporation for

National and Community Service for tenant outreach grants, Americorps and VISTA Volunteers to enable local groups to "organize the unorganized" tenants in their areas?

7. Enforce the Right to Organize.

Will you enforce HUD tenants' Right to Organize free of harassment and retaliation, and penalize owners and managers who violate these rights?

8. End HUD corruption and abuse of power.

Will you end corruption in HUD contract awards, investigate HUD violations of the Anti Deficiency Act in Section 8 contract renewals, and end HUD's policies of political retaliation, failure to honor contracts, and abuse of audit powers against tenant outreach groups?

9. End gentrification and speculation in affordable housing.

Will you implement controls on global investment in housing markets to prevent speculators from buying up affordable and HUD assisted housing and converting it to high market rents or condominiums? Will you end HUD complicity in racially discriminatory displacement, gentrification and redevelopment schemes?

10. Defend Public Housing and empower Public Housing and Voucher tenants.

Will you support the demands of NAHT's sister organization in Public Housing, the National Housing Justice Movement, for a moratorium on demolitions and privatizations of Public Housing, one-to-one replacement of lost units and a Right of Return for displaced residents, support for Public Housing tenants' Right to Organize independently of PHA's and to participate in decisions affecting their homes, and to end punitive policies against tenants?

11. Ensure the Right to Return.

Will you ensure that all people displaced by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita realize their Right to Return, with one-to-one replacement for all public and HUD subsidized housing? Will you enforce housing and civil rights and withhold funds, if necessary, to ensure compliance by local and state authorities? Will you support the Gulf Coast Recovery Act, and work for its passage?

12. Ratify the Right to Adequate Housing.

Will you sign and seek Senate ratification of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, to establish (among others) an enforceable Right to Adequate Housing in the USA?