

The National Alliance of HUD Tenants' Successful "Save Our Homes Campaign" Fiscal Year 2011

In October of every year, Congress votes on the upcoming year's fiscal budget. Sometimes they delay voting on a final budget for months. This year, Congress did not have a final Fiscal Year 2011 budget until April of 2011.

In the winter of 2011, the House of Representatives passed draconian H.R. 1, which was supported by the Tea Party Republicans. This legislation cut HUD's budget by \$5.4 billion, including deep losses for public housing and for housing for the disabled.

The National Alliance of HUD Tenants responded by coordinating a National Day of Action for Valentine's Day, 2011. On February 14th, tenants and our allies across the country told Congress to "Have a Heart, Save Our Homes" and pass a final budget that would restore full funding to HUD rental program. From San Francisco to Boston, tenants from 19 cities coordinated actions. The protests received press in the Huffington Post, *The Nation* blog, international press, as well as local press in each city.



The Boston Story:

On Valentine's Day, more than 120 tenants gathered at a Boston City Council hearing on a Resolution urging the Massachusetts Congressional delegation to support full funding for vital HUD programs. Tenants and allies then marched across City Hall Plaza and rallied at the JFK Federal Building to deliver Valentines to Senator Scott Brown (R-MA) urging him to oppose HUD budget cuts. Later tenants from Georgetowne Homes delivered 350 postcards from their development to Senator Brown, urging him to fight for HUD funding. NAHT succeeded in procuring a meeting with the Senator on March 31st. Immediately afterwards, Senator Brown issued a letter and spoke on the Senate floor opposing "irresponsible" budget cuts adversely affecting the elderly and the poor.

The Chicago Story :

On February 25th, more than 300 HUD tenants, service providers and allies from across the Chicago metro-region marched to protest deep cuts to the HUD budget. Protestors constructed a cardboard box “Tea Party Housing Development” to block traffic on Clark Street during rush hour to draw public attention to the injustice of targeting the deepest federal budget cuts to the programs for low and moderate income communities, including vital HUD programs. The action shut down traffic at the Chicago Federal Building, which houses the office of Illinois Senators Dick Durban (D) and Mark Kirk (R), both members of the Senate Appropriations Committee. 11 protestors participating in the traffic blockade were arrested and released a few hours later.



Our coordinated actions worked! After the Senate passed its version of the budget, and the House and Senate worked together to create and approve a final budget, the cuts to the HUD budget were minimal:

- Project Based Section 8 was fully funded, including increased for newly expiring contracts
- There was sufficient money to keep the Section 8 Voucher Program at current levels
- There was sufficient money in Tenant Protection Vouchers to cover costs of expiring Section 8 contracts
- Funding for disabled tenants was restored
- Vouchers for homeless veterans were restored
- Although the Public Housing Capital Fund was cut 20% (from \$2.5 to \$2 billion) below FY2010 levels, the final amount funded was the same as the President’s request for FY2011, not the 40% cut proposed by HR1
- There was sufficient money for Public Housing Operating Funds
- Although new Elderly and Handicapped Housing programs were cut below 2010 funding level, the final numbers were higher than the President’s 2011 request
- There were no “recissions” for 2010 HOPE VI grants, so there is money to complete “pipeline” projects (like Old Colony in South Boston)

Our Campaign made a difference!

Rental housing programs we prioritized were either fully funded, or cut no more than Obama’s proposal for 2011—in some cases the final numbers were actually higher than Obama’s request! Congratulations to all the tenant leaders, organizers and local groups who helped to MAKE TENANT VOICES HEARD in Washington!!