



PRESIDENT SIGNS OMNIBUS APPROPRIATIONS BILL. On December 26, President Bush signed into law the omnibus spending bill passed by Congress for FY 2008. For USDA and HUD housing funding levels, see *HAC News*, 12/19/07, <http://www.ruralhome.org/infoNews.php?id=371>.

FARM BILL, FHA AMENDMENTS PASS SENATE. On December 14 the Senate passed its version of H.R. 2419, a new Farm Bill. The text is not yet available. Also on December 14, the Senate passed its FHA modernization bill, S. 2338. The measure is similar to the House bill, H.R. 1852 (see *HAC News*, 9/26/07), but the Senate did not include National Housing Trust Fund funding that would be provided by the House version. Separate conference committees will meet to negotiate compromises on the Farm and FHA bills. Bills are posted at <http://thomas.loc.gov>.

FEDERAL IDA FUNDS OFFERED. The Department of Health and Human Services has issued a new "standing notice" for the Assets for Independence Demonstration Program. Nonprofits, government entities, credit unions, and others are eligible. Deadlines are January 15 and March 25 in 2008, 2009, and 2010. Contact AFI staff at 202-401-4626, afiprogram@acf.hhs.gov or visit <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/open/HHS-2008-ACF-OCS-EI-0053.html>.

NEW MARKETS TAX CREDITS ALLOCATIONS AVAILABLE FOR FY 2008. Deadline is March 5. To provide a fair share to nonmetro places (see *HAC News*, 5/23/07), the CDFI Fund will ensure they get 20% of total NMTC investment dollars and will give "special consideration" to applicants with successful past nonmetro NMTC use. To join a January 16 webcast or find upcoming live sessions, visit <http://www.cdfifund.gov> or call 202-622-9046. See *Federal Register*, 12/28/07, pp. 73976-87. Contact CDFI Fund staff, cdfihelp@cdfi.treas.gov, 202-622-6355.

NEW PAYMENT ASSISTANCE PLAN ADOPTED FOR SECTION 502. Under the final version of Payment Assistance 2, Section 502 direct borrowers with eligibility determinations on or after April 1 will pay the higher of 24% of income, or principal and interest calculated at 1% plus taxes and insurance. A summary and links are on HAC's site at http://www.ruralhome.org/infoAnnouncements_2007RDPA2.php. See *Federal Register*, 12/27/07, pp. 73252-56. Contact Michael S. Feinberg, RD, michael.feinberg@wdc.usda.gov, 202-720-1474.

HUD'S NEW CDBG TOOLKITS AVAILABLE ONLINE. Each toolkit is intended to provide CDBG entitlement and state grantees with regulations, notices, HUD handbooks, links, and more. Modules covering financial management, environmental review, labor standards, and fair housing are posted at <http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/communitydevelopment/toolkit/index.cfm>; an acquisition and relocation module is forthcoming.

RCDI RECIPIENTS ANNOUNCED. USDA RD selected 38 intermediaries to provide technical assistance with FY 2007 Rural Community Development Initiative funds. See USDA's press release and list of recipients at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rhs/rcdi/index.htm> or contact an RD office.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES GUARANTEED LOANS FULLY USED IN 2007. A November 30 letter from RD Housing and Community Facilities Programs Administrator Russell Davis congratulates RD staff for using all available CF guaranteed loan funds for the first time. The unnumbered letter is available at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/regs/ul/ulnovember07.pdf> or from an RD office.

INCOME INEQUALITY INCREASING. New Congressional Budget Office data show the richest households' incomes are growing much faster than the poorest, according to analyses by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, <http://www.cbpp.org/12-14-07inc.htm>, and the Economic Policy Institute, <http://www.epi.org/content.cfm/ib239>.

HOUSING WAGES FOR 2008 RELEASED. The National Low Income Housing Coalition reports that 77% of U.S. renter households earned income from wages or salaries in 2006, and members of the typical working renter household combined to work 42 hours per week, but earnings for many were not sufficient to afford the Fair Market Rent for an appropriate-sized home in their state. NLIHC will publish its *Out of Reach 2008* report and data in early spring. *Research Note #07-03* is available at http://www.nlihc.org/doc/ResearchNote_12-07.pdf.

PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES' VIEWS ON POVERTY POSTED. Spotlight on Poverty and Opportunity, a project funded by several foundations, features candidates' statements and proposals on poverty as well as news updates, opinions, and research. Visit <http://www.spotlightonpoverty.org>.

HAC'S WEB CALENDAR LISTS CONFERENCES AND MORE. Visit <http://www.ruralhome.org/events.php>. Submit items to Janice Clark, HAC, 202-842-8600, janice@ruralhome.org.

REGISTRATION CONTINUES FOR 2008 HAC TRAINING. *Building Rural Communities Through CHDOs* will be offered in Birmingham, Ala., Lafayette, La., Kansas City, Mo., and Jacksonville, Fla. in January, February, and March. Register online at <http://www.ruralhome.org/servicesTraining.php> or email registration@ruralhome.org.