



CONTINUING RESOLUTION TO SHORTEN RA CONTRACTS. Appropriations have not yet been completed for FY 2008, which begins October 1, so Congress is expected to adopt a CR this week. The National Rural Housing Coalition reports that it will continue most federal programs at FY 2007 funding levels through November 16 and will require Section 521 Rental Assistance contracts to be for one year. The CRs that funded the government from October 1, 2006 through February 15, 2007 included the same provision; for the rest of FY 2007, RA contracts were two years long. Watch HAC's site, <http://www.ruralhome.org>, for more details as they become available.

SENATE COMMITTEE PASSES MCKINNEY-VENTO REAUTHORIZATION. On September 19 the Senate Banking Committee passed the Community Partnership to End Homelessness Act, which would consolidate HUD's main homelessness programs (Supportive Housing Program, Shelter Plus Care, and Moderate Rehabilitation/Single Room Occupancy) into a new Community Homeless Assistance Program. It would also create a new Rural Housing Stability Assistance Program to replace HUD's dormant Rural Homelessness Grant Program. Rural communities could use funds for homelessness prevention and housing stabilization, in addition to transitional housing, permanent housing, and supportive services. S. 1518 moves next to the Senate floor and is available at <http://thomas.loc.gov>.

HOUSE AND SENATE MOVE FHA REFORM. H.R. 1852 passed the House on September 18. It would allow FHA to serve more subprime borrowers, give struggling homeowners a chance to refinance their mortgages, and increase the FHA loan limit. It also authorizes the use of up to \$300 million from excess FHA profits for an affordable housing trust fund. The Senate Banking Committee passed a different, still unnumbered FHA modernization bill on September 19. It would reduce downpayment requirements and raise the loan limit. It does not include an affordable housing trust fund. Both bills are available at <http://thomas.loc.gov>.

COMMITTEE ADVANCES HOUSING BILLS. The House Financial Services Committee approved three housing bills on September 25. H.R. 2930 amends the HUD Section 202 elderly housing program. H.R. 3521 makes changes to HUD's system of public housing asset management. H.R. 3355 provides new supports for insurance markets for homeowners victimized by natural disasters. The committee is expected to approve H.R. 3524 on September 26, reauthorizing the HOPE VI program with new green building requirements. All bills are at <http://thomas.loc.gov>.

JOHANNES RESIGNS AS USDA SECRETARY, DORR A POSSIBLE REPLACEMENT. Deputy Secretary Chuck Conner, who is now Acting Secretary, is the leading replacement candidate, according to the *Washington Post*. Conner grew up on an Indiana farm and has worked on Senate staff, for a growers' trade association, and for the President's economic council before joining USDA in 2005. Other possible nominees include Tom Dorr, currently Under Secretary for Rural Development. For details visit <http://www.usda.gov> and www.washingtonpost.com.

BROWNFIELDS GRANTS AVAILABLE. Government entities can apply by December 24 for Brownfields Economic Development Initiative grants and Section 108 loan guarantees from HUD. See *Federal Register*, 9/24/07, pp. 54323-39 or <http://www.grants.gov>. Contact David Kaminsky, HUD, 202-402-4612.

RD PROVIDES SELF-HELP TA APPLICATION GUIDANCE. AN 4304 (1944-I), which includes checklists for Section 523 applicants and RD staff, is available at www.rurdev.usda.gov/regs/an/an4304.pdf or from RD offices.

2008 LIHTC DIFFICULT DEVELOPMENT AREAS DESIGNATED. Qualified Census Tracts remain unchanged. See *Federal Register*, 9/18/07, pp. 53381-92 or <http://www.huduser.org/datasets/qct.html>. Contact Michael K. Hollar, HUD, 202-402-5878, Michael.K.Hollar@hud.gov.

HUD PLANS RISK-BASED SINGLE-FAMILY FHA PREMIUMS. Comments are due October 22. See *Federal Register*, 9/20/07, pp. 53871-73 or <http://www.regulations.gov>. Contact Margaret Burns, HUD, 202-708-2121.

MORE LENDERS GET 18-MONTH EXAM CYCLE. New rules allow federal regulators to examine well-managed banks and thrifts with up to \$500 million in assets every 18 months rather than every 12. See *Federal Register*, 9/25/07, pp. 54347-49 or <http://www.occ.gov/ftp/release/2007-99.htm>. Mitchell Plave, OCC, 202-874-5090.

USDA PROPOSES NEW RULE FOR NON-HOUSING GUARANTEES. A "unified platform" would consolidate the regulations for Community Facilities, Water and Waste, Business and Industry, and Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency guaranteed loans. Comments are due November 13. See *Federal Register*, 9/14/07, pp. 52617-66 or <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/regs>. Contact Michael Foore, RD, Michael.Foore@wdc.usda.gov, 202-690-4730.

GAO reports on veterans' use of HUD programs. *Rental Housing: Information on Low-Income Veterans' Housing Conditions and Participation in HUD's Programs* (GAO-07-1012) is free at <http://www.gao.gov> or from GAO, 202-512-6000.