PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES’ AND PARTIES’ POSITIONS LIMITED ON RURAL AND HOUSING. The candidates on rural issues: On October 9 the Romney campaign released “Agricultural Prosperity: Mitt Romney’s Vision for a Vibrant Rural America,” which addresses taxes, trade, regulation, and energy as they relate to farmers and ranchers. The Obama campaign's web page entitled “Rural America” mentions agriculture, rural businesses, rural veterans, and energy and another post responds to Romney's rural paper. The parties on rural issues: The Republican platform discusses agriculture but does not include other rural issues. The Democratic platform mentions rural small business, education, and infrastructure – though not housing – in addition to agriculture and energy. The candidates on housing: Romney's white paper on housing, “Securing the American Dream and the Future of Housing Policy,” covers the housing finance crisis and the Romney-Ryan plan to “revitalize the private sector’s role in the housing market.” The issues section of Obama’s campaign website does not include housing, although a site search retrieved information about Administration initiatives on foreclosure and housing finance. The parties on housing and poverty: The Republican Party platform supports homeownership and mortgage finance reform, and acknowledges a role for government in “enforcing non-discrimination laws and assisting low-income families and the elderly with safe and adequate shelter, especially through the use of housing vouchers.” Its anti-poverty plank calls for “the federal government’s entire system of public assistance [to] be reformed to ensure that it promotes work.” The Democratic Party platform sup-ports homeownership and foreclosure relief, but does not mention rental housing. It states, “We must make ending poverty a national priority” through jobs, safety net programs, lending, an increased minimum wage, a strong labor movement, education, and attention to inequality. The parties on Native peoples: Both parties acknowledge the federal government’s special relationship with American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians. Both support tribal self-governance and respect Native culture.

USDA AND BIA COMMIT TO WORK TOGETHER FOR INDIAN COUNTRY HOUSING IMPROVEMENT. Two Memoranda of Understanding, effective for five years, apply to housing as well as other rural development programs, farm programs, and conservation. They pledge better understanding and coordinated processes related to housing. Contact Ted Buelow, RD, 720-544-2911.

CONTINUUM OF CARE COMMENT DEADLINE EXTENDED. Interim CoC regulations were published July 31 with comments due October 1. The deadline is now November 16. See Federal Register, 9/28/12, or regulations.gov. Contact Ann Marie Oliva, HUD, 202-708-4300.

HUD REQUESTS COMMENT ON SMOKE-FREE POLICIES. The department requests best practices and practical strategies from housing providers who have implemented smoke-free policies and input from housing providers that have decided not to implement such a policy and from those impacted by that decision. Comments are due November 5. See Federal Register, 10/4/12 or regulations.gov. Contact Shauna Sorrells, HUD, 202-402-2769.

FY12 FAIR MARKET RENTS FINALIZED. See Federal Register, 10/5/12, or HUDUser.org. Contact local HUD program staff.

DIFFICULT DEVELOPMENT AREAS ANNOUNCED. HUD designates DDAs for purposes of the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit. Adoption of small area DDAs (see HAC News, 11/1/11) has been delayed. Qualified Census Tracts for 2013 were designated in April 2012 (see HAC News, 5/2/12). See Federal Register, 9/28/12 or HUDUser.org. Contact Michael K. Hollar, HUD, 202-402-5878.

ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONS PROVIDED ON RAD. HUD’s information is for PHAs and owners applying under the Rental Assistance Demonstration to convert public and assisted housing to long-term, project-based Section 8 rental assistance. See Federal Register, 9/28/12, or HUD’s website. Contact HUD RAD staff.

POLL FINDS SUPPORT FOR MODIFYING MORTGAGE INTEREST DEDUCTION. A poll conducted in August for the National Low Income Housing Coalition found that 56% of Americans favor replacing the mortgage interest deduction with a tax credit that would provide the same percentage benefit for all households regardless of income. Nearly two-thirds (63%) support capping the size of mortgage for which one can get a tax break at $500,000. In
addition, 68% believe that not being able to find affordable housing is a large or very large national problem. Strong majorities support federal programs to build or rehabilitate affordable rental housing (69%) and federal programs to help low-income families pay their rent (59%). When asked how to use the savings the federal government would gain from the proposed modifications to the mortgage interest deduction, 63% of those polled would make ending homelessness a top or high priority use. Contact Amy Clark, NLIHC, 202-662-1530, ext. 227.