NCDA Washington Report

January 31, 2017

Contact Your Lawmakers Today to Finalize FY 2017 Funding Now

Although there is a new Congress in Washington, DC, work from the previous Congress remains unfinished - a finalized FY 2017 spending bill. Contact your lawmakers today to tell them to pass a final spending bill for the current fiscal year now. Prior to adjourning for the final time in December, the 114th Congress approved a continuing resolution (CR) that provides funding only until Friday, April 28. If Congress does not act on FY 2017 before that deadline, nearly seven months of the fiscal year will be funded through a CR. This is problematic for communities that rely on Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) dollars because HUD does not traditionally award funding until a full-year bill is in place, leaving communities to wonder what their CDBG grant level will be for the year and when they'll receive it.

Please send the letter below to your lawmakers explaining the importance of passing a full year spending bill to your community. Your voice is critical to ensuring that Congress knows the importance of finalizing FY 2017 spending. Please edit the letter to include local examples of the impact of delaying spending decisions and the good work that CDBG dollars do in your community.

Dear Representative/Senator,

As a member of the National Community Development Association, I urge you to finalize FY 2017 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (THUD) spending bill now. The repeated failure of the appropriations process in recent years has demonstrated the burden inflicted on communities by funding the government through a series of short-term CRs, a burden our community feels acutely right now. Many grant programs, like the Community Development Block Grant program (CDBG), do not award grants until a final spending bill in place, leaving many communities wondering what funding will be available to them and severely hampering project planning. This is unnecessary and entirely avoidable.

Postponing spending decisions until the expiration of the current CR on April 28 will have a huge negative impact on our community; I rely on consistent, predictable CDBG dollars to do my job and our community relies on CDBG for a wide variety of purposes. Once a finalized spending bill is in place, it can take up to two months to distribute CDBG funding. We cannot wait that long for these critical dollars.

CDBG enhances communities across the country, not just ours. CDBG is arguably one of the federal government's most successful domestic programs, providing communities with flexible dollars to address a myriad of local needs, such as affordable housing, anti-poverty programs, and infrastructure development. Every $1.00 of CDBG funding leverages another $3.65 in private and public dollars. A study by HIS Global Insights found that the $3.9 billion invested in CDBG in FY 2010 generated 120,000 jobs and contributed $10.7 billion in gross domestic product to our nation.

However, this work is contingent on the reliability and consistency of CDBG funding. Please help ensure that our community will be able to utilize its FY 2017 CDBG dollars as soon as possible by finalizing THUD spending before the 114th Congress adjourns for the final time.

Thank you,

Early Education of New Congress Critical to Protecting CDBG, HOME

In early January, the 115th Congress was officially sworn into office, including 55 new members of the House of Representatives and seven new Senators. These freshman, along with many previous members of Congress, may not be familiar with federal community development programs and they will be making critical spending decisions for both the current and upcoming fiscal year soon.

Leveraging your National Community Development Week events will be a critical component in protecting the Community Development Block Grant program and HOME this year - contact your members of Congress as you're planning your events.

Though the release of the Administration's budget proposal is likely to be delayed until as late as June, work will begin immediately on Capitol Hill in preparation for the upcoming fiscal year. Funding for community development programs could be at risk for FY 2017 and FY 2018. Defense-hawks are pushing to increase funding for defense programs at the expense of non-defense discretionary programs, including those at HUD, the President's FY 2018 has the potential to be damaging for HUD in general, and CDBG and HOME specifically, and some conservative groups are calling for the elimination of CDBG (see the article below). This means that the timing of National Community Development Week, which runs from April 17-22, is perfect timing to educate your members of Congress about what community development programs you use in your community and show them successful projects completed using federal funding. Make sure you're in contact with your Congressional delegation about your events that week so they can see the impact and support the programs in your community.

For tips on how to build relationships with your legislators and plan effective site visits, NCDA has put together a video to guide you through the process.

National Community Development Week: Invite Your Legislators to Participate in Activities

National Community Development Week is always held during a Congressional district work period and is the perfect opportunity to demonstrate to your Congressional delegation how critical community developing funding is in your area. We've heard recently from Congressional staff that inviting members of Congress to site visits and other events that showcase the importance of community development funding in your area will be a critical factor in preserving the programs in the difficult upcoming fiscal year- do your part to help by inviting your Congressional delegation to your National Community Development Week events. A few early actions can help ensure that your members of Congress or their staff is available to participate in your event.

- First, decide what type of event you'd like to hold so you can communicate basic details to Congressional schedulers and other staff. Offices will ask questions like: who is participating, what is the size of the event, where and when is the event, what is the focus, will the Senator/Representative be asked to make remarks, and will there be media? You don't need a fully-planned event, but being able to provide those details will be helpful to staff. If the date and time of your event is flexible, you may be able to work with staff to better fit in the Senator's or Representative's schedule. *If not, extend the offer to relevant policy staff who may be in town for the work period.*

- Second, contact offices ASAP- it's never too early to submit your scheduling request.

  Start by calling your most local district office- phone numbers for district offices are available on the legislators' web sites. Some offices schedule exclusively through their DC office, so you may need to make several calls before you get in contact with the appropriate staffer. Ask for the scheduler who handles the member's calendar while the member is in the district and make sure you get his/her contact information so you can follow-up directly.

  Many offices have a form to fill out or will ask for a formal invite letter, so get very specific instructions on their process for submitting a scheduling request and submit your request immediately.

- Third, follow-up frequently. Staffers, particularly schedulers, are extremely busy and juggle dozens of scheduling requests at any given time. Make sure that your request doesn't fall between the cracks by following up frequently. Ask the staffer handling your request what the best way to get in touch with him/her is and use those communication methods. If you are having trouble getting in touch with the person handling your request, leave messages with the office receptionist, too.

- Finally, don't get discouraged if members of Congress or their staff cannot accommodate your request. Work with the office on alternative ways they can participate- ask if they can issue a press release about your event, promote it on social media, or begin a scheduling request for a district work period later in the year. They may have other ideas on how they can participate, so be flexible.

- For more information on how to build relationships and plan an effective site visit, NCDA has prepared a video to help guide you through the process.

Heritage Foundation Report Calls for Elimination of CDBG

The conservative Heritage Foundation released a report, *Blueprint for Reform: A Comprehensive Policy Agenda for a New Administration in* 2017, outlining a set of federal reforms and calling for the outright elimination of some federal programs, including CDBG. Although the report was released early last year, the Trump Administration is rumored to be looking at the report in developing their FY 2018 budget.

Page 66 of the report reads as follows:

Community Development. The federal government operates the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), which provides money to state and local governments for low-income housing, infrastructure development, public services, and other activities. This program has been in place since 1974 and has cost the taxpayers more than $100 billion during the course of its lifetime. The CDBG is not well-targeted to low-income communities, and due to a lack of transparency in the data it is difficult to assess whether the program is meeting its stated goals of, among others, creating jobs for low-income individuals and eliminating "slums and blight." **The report goes on to recommend the elimination of the CDBG program in FY 2018.**

Besides the elimination of CDBG, the report calls for the elimination of the Federal Housing Administration, and the transfer of subsidized housing programs (Section 8, Public Housing) from HUD to the States in the form of a means-tested block grant that would be phased-out over 10 years, leaving States and local authorities with the responsibility of funding the programs on their own.

Further, the Republican Study Committee issued a report last year, *Blueprint for a Balanced Budget 2.0*, calling for elimination of CDBG (and Section 108) in FY 2017 as well as many other federal programs.

Trump's FY 2018 budget is not expected to be released until late spring, so it's too early to tell if any of these draconian recommendations will be put forward by the Administration for FY 2018. The FY 2017 appropriations bills are still pending in Congress, but we're hearing that Congress will likely enact a Continuing Resolution that will run through the remainder of the fiscal year (September 30); meaning, CDBG, HOME and other programs will likely be level-funded for FY 2017. We urge you to make your voices heard on FY 2018 funding for CDBG and HOME by reaching out to your Congressional Members and participating in National Community Development Week.

Sign-On to the NDD United Letter by February 10 to Protect Non-Defense Programs

President Trump recently appointed of Rep. Mick Mulvaney (R-SC) to the position of Director of the Office of Management and Budget. Mulvaney is a deficit hawk having founded the ultra-conservative Freedom Caucus in the House of Representatives which advocates for spending austerity. Sequestration is upon us again as the temporary and partial relief of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 expires in FY 2017. The letter developed by Non-Defense Discretionary (NDD) United, of which NCDA is a member, seeks support of repealing sequestration and the protection of non-defense discretionary programs from further cuts. Please sign-on to the letter by February 10th and urge your local and state partners to sign-on as well. We all need to stand together to let the President know that NDD funding has been cut too much.

Carson Expected to be Confirmed Soon by the Senate

Dr. Ben Carson is expected to be confirmed soon by the U.S. Senate to lead the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Dr. Carson testified before the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs on January 12. His opening statement for the hearing is available here. In his opening statement, he emphasized the importance of decent, safe housing; citing the connection between poor health and substandard housing. He also recognized the importance of paring back federal regulations to increase the affordable housing supply. He hinted at the need to reform the Federal Housing Administration. While he mentioned his support of the CDBG program during the hearing, he also mentioned that the program needs to be evaluated for improvement. He didn't elaborate further. The CDBG Coalition will reach out for a meeting with Dr. Carson once he is confirmed by the Senate as HUD Secretary.

HUD Housing Counseling Certification Final Rule Webinar – February 6

HUD published the Housing Counseling: New Certification Requirements Final Rule in the Federal Register on December 14, 2016. The rule requires that all housing counseling done in conjunction with a HUD program must be done by a HUD-certified housing counselor. Counselors have up to 36 months after the date that the HUD housing counselor certification examination becomes available (which will be published in a separate Federal Register notice) to comply with the certification requirement. HUD will hold a webinar on February 6 to go over the rule. NCDA will also hold a session on the final rule at the upcoming Winter Conference in Washington, DC.

2017 NCDA Winter Conference

The 2017 NCDA Winter Conference will be held February 15-17 in Washington, DC at the Holiday Inn Capitol Hill. Conference registration remains open. We invite you to join your peers to hear the latest news regarding FY17 and FY18 funding for CDBG and HOME, learn new ideas and best practices for administering your programs, obtain program updates from HUD staff, and network with your fellow community development professionals. The updated conference agenda is attached.

2017 Audrey Nelson Award Winners

NCDA received 13 applications for the 2017 Audrey Nelson Award. NCDA's Planning and Professional Development Subcommittee rated and ranked the applications. The following communities will receive the award during a special ceremony on February 16th during the NCDA Winter Conference.

Palm Springs, CA
Desert AIDS Project

Boston, MA
Orlando-Waldeck: Acquisition Opportunity Fund Program

Lawrence, MA
Lawrence Venture Fund

New York, NY
Bronx River Project

Fort Worth, TX
Southeast Community Health Center

Irving, TX
Tudor Lane Redevelopment

Burlington, VT
Bright Street Cooperative

Upcoming NCDA Training

NCDA is pleased to announce the following CDBG training. Members receive a discounted rate. HOME training courses will be announced soon.

Advanced CDBG/Underwriting
March 20-21, 2017
Vancouver, WA

CDBG Basics: Training for Practitioners
April 3-5, 2017
St. Louis, MO

CDBG Basics: Training for Practitioners
May 16-18, 2017
Murfreesboro, TN

Please go here to download the course brochures and to register online.

If your city/county is interested in sponsoring a CDBG or HOME training, please contact Steve Gartrell at sgartrell@ncdaonline.org

Save the Date for the NCDA Annual Conference: June 14-17 in Miami, FL

Join us in Miami for the 48th NCDA Annual Conference.

2017 NCDA 48th Annual Conference
Hyatt Regency Miami
June 14-17, 2017

Miami, FL

Early Registration Ends April 1, 2017: $450 members/$550 non-members
Conference Registration Form

To make your hotel reservation, please call 888-421-1442 and reference the NCDA Room Block to receive the special rate of $119.00 per night plus tax.

Department of Housing and Urban Development Budget Chart

Program	FY16 Enacted Funding Level	President's FY17 Budget Request	Senate FY17 Request	House Appropriations Committee FY17 Request	Continuing Resolution through April 28, 2017
CDBG Formula Grants	$3.0 billion	$2.8 billion	$3.0 billion	$3.0 billion	$3.0 billion
HOME Formula Grants	$950 million	$950 million	$950 million	$950 million	$950 million
Homeless Assistance Grants	$2.25 billion	$2.664 million	$2.330 billion	$2.487 billion	$2.25 billion
Section 108	$300 million	$300 million	$300 million	$300 million	$300 million
Choice Neighborhoods	$125 million	$200 million	$80 million	$100 million	$125 million
HOPWA	$335 million	$335 million	$335 million	$335 million	$335 million
Lead Based Paint Hazard Reduction	$110 million	$110 million	$135 million	$130 million	$110 million
Elderly Housing (Section 202)	$433 million	$505 million	$505 million	$505 million	$433 million
Housing for Persons with Disabilities (811)	$151 million	$154 million	$154 million	$154 million	$151 million
Housing Counseling	$47 million	$47 million	$47 million	$55 million	$47 million
Housing Choice Vouchers	$19.629 billion	$20.854 billion*	$20.432 billion**	$20.189 billion***	$19.629 billion
Project-Based Section 8	$10.62 billion	$10.816 billion	$10.901 billion	$10.901 billion	$10.62 billion

Public Housing Capital Fund	$1.9 billion	$1.865 billion	$1.925 billion	$1.900 billion	$1.9 billion
Public Housing Operating Fund	$4.5 billion	$4.569 billion	$4.675 billion	$4.500 billion	$4.5 billion

*includes $18.447 billion for voucher renewals, $110 million for tenant protection vouchers, $2 billion for administrative fees, $88 million for new/restored vouchers, and $110 million for Section 811 Mainstream Vouchers

**includes $18.355 billion for voucher renewals, $110 million for tenant-protection vouchers, $1.769 billion for administrative fees, $20 million for new/restored vouchers, and $110 million for Section 811 Mainstream Vouchers

***Includes $18.312 billion for voucher renewals, $110 million for tenant-protection vouchers, $1.650 billion for administrative fees, $7 million for new Tribal HUD-VASH vouchers, and $110 million for Section 811 Mainstream Vouchers.