

# **H.R. 44, THE STABILIZING AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR THE FUTURE ACT**

Model Letter to your Illinois Representative

**Summary:** H.R. 44 represents the most important preservation bill to be proposed in Congress in years. Proposed by Representative Nydia Velasquez of New York, the bill calls for a change of priorities at HUD, including repealing its authority to rescind Section 8 contracts at will during property disposition, as well as unfairly raise prices of foreclosed properties when selling to local governments. It also calls upon HUD to publish and update information about multifamily buildings online, including REAC scores and any issued notices to prepay or terminate mortgages and contracts. Finally, it reinstates the Up Front Grant program, making it a permanent program to fund preservation transactions.

These are some of the key changes that advocates and practitioners have been waiting to push through for years. Show your support for H.R. 44 by sending a letter to your delegate in the House of Representatives, as well as to the key members on the House Financial Services Committee. Currently, only one Illinois Representative—Jan Schakowsky—has signed onto the bill as a co-sponsor.

Our delegation needs to hear your voice!

**See following page for a list of Representatives and their addresses. To find out which district you reside in, go to [www.vote-smart.org](http://www.vote-smart.org) and enter your 9-digit zip code.**

**For an electronic copy of the letter, e-mail: [Lindsay@Chicagorehab.org](mailto:Lindsay@Chicagorehab.org)  
For more information, call: (312) 663-3936**

## Chicagoland Representatives

### **DISTRICT 1**

The Honorable Bobby Rush  
2416 Rayburn House Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20515-1301

### **DISTRICT 2**

The Honorable Jesse L. Jackson, Jr.  
2419 Rayburn House Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20515-0005

### **DISTRICT 4**

The Honorable Luis V. Gutierrez  
2266 Rayburn House Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20515-1304

### **DISTRICT 5**

The Honorable Rahm Emanuel  
1319 Longworth House Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20515-1305

### **DISTRICT 7**

The Honorable Danny Davis  
2159 Rayburn House Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20515-1307

## Illinois Members of the Financial Services Committee

### **DISTRICT 6**

The Honorable Peter Roskam  
507 Cannon House Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20515

### **DISTRICT 8**

The Honorable Melissa Bean  
318 Cannon House Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20515-1012

### **\*DISTRICT 13**

#### **(Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity)**

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
1034 Longworth House Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20515-2110

### **DISTRICT 16**

The Honorable Donald Manzullo  
2228 Rayburn House Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20515-1309

## Other Important Members of the Financial Services Committee

### **Financial Services Committee Chair (Massachusetts District 4)**

The Honorable Barney Frank  
2252 Rayburn House Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20515-2104

### **Housing and Community Opportunity Subcommittee Chair (California District 35)**

The Honorable Maxine Waters  
2344 Rayburn House Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20515-0535

The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

May 23, 2007

Dear Representative \_\_\_\_\_,

I am writing to express my approval of H.R. 44, the Stabilizing Affordable Housing for the Future Act. The passage of H.R. 44 will bolster the preservation of our affordable multifamily housing, a resource we in Illinois have aggressively utilized and protected. What's more, the changes proposed in this bill are largely basic requirements for accountability and fairness on the part of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Key changes include:

- **Repealing HUD's "flexible authority"** to dispose of Section 8 contracts at will during foreclosure and property disposition.
- **Requiring HUD to maintain project-based assistance** for any purchaser seeking to keep a property affordable. We see little reason why project-based contracts should not be preserved when new owners wish to keep a property affordable.
- **Requiring HUD to use standard appraisal methods** when offering properties for sale to local governments. The inflation of prices from this practice makes it unfeasible for our local government to use its Right of First Refusal to buy and help preserve the affordability of these properties.
- **Requiring HUD to maintain active online postings** of information about conditions of multifamily buildings, updated quarterly, including REAC scores, and notices of plans to prepay or terminate loans/contracts. Having access to this information will help us enormously in our efforts to locate buildings and determine preservation strategies in our community.
- **Reinstating the Up Front Grant Program** funded by annual insurance premiums. The dollars provided by this funding stream go a long way in terms of jumpstarting preservation deals.

We can see overwhelming reasons for preservation. The last several years has witnessed an enormous net loss of affordable housing in our community and across the country, particularly as HUD contracts have expired and private owners have opted out or failed to renew. Other factors in the housing landscape include the stagnation of income relative to rising housing costs, together with the demolition of public housing and the decline of the rental housing market overall; in the last five years alone, Chicago lost more than 70,000 renter-occupied units, and saw nearly half of all our renters and homeowners forced to pay over 30% of their income for housing.

As an Illinois Representative, you have an opportunity to take leadership and create consensus around *the key affordable housing issue* of our time. Over the last ten years, preservation has become a top priority for those in the affordable housing field, as the production of new affordable housing becomes more and more costly. By supporting H.R. 44, you can direct HUD to prioritize preservation in an age where

new production of affordable housing is less and less practical, yet demand for affordable housing is accelerating.

Illinois has historically been a leading state in the utilization of HUD programs, as well as in the passing local measures to preserve the housing resources in our state.

**[ → Insert information on your organization's activities around preservation. ]**

The current Illinois congressional delegation now has the opportunity to mirror these local precedents and efforts at the national level, supporting preservation through demanding a shift in priorities at HUD. We recognize that safe, decent, affordable housing is critical for healthy and stable communities, and we urge you to ensure the passage of H.R. 44.

Sincerely,

Name\_\_\_\_\_

Title\_\_\_\_\_

Organization\_\_\_\_\_