

Action Alert!

This notice is an official public policy announcement of the Roman Catholic Church in the State of Hawaii.

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10:57 AM

Director: Kelly M. Rosati, JD

House to Vote (Today) on Money for a National Housing Trust Fund!

The House is debating H.R. 1427, the Federal Housing Reform Act of 2007, with a final vote coming as early as Tuesday, May 22. While the USCCB has no position on H.R. 1427, which establishes new regulations for Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and the Federal Home Loan Banks, there are two issues the USCCB is following:

(1) HR 1427 includes a provision reserving some \$500,000,000 a year as a dedicated source of funding for an affordable housing trust fund. The Catholic bishops have long supported the creation of a national housing trust fund as one way to meet our nation's promise of a decent home for every American family.

A National Housing Trust Fund would serve as a source of revenue for the production of new housing, and the preservation or rehabilitation of existing housing that is affordable for low income people.

The lack of affordable housing in our nation threatens the well-being of families and the economic life of our communities. The lack of housing in our communities affects economic development—businesses simply will not locate in communities where their workers cannot live.

(2) An amendment has been offered (Mr. Hensarling AMENDMENT NO. 28) that would have the effect of **excluding** the Catholic Church and other religious organizations from using the housing trust funds to help low-income families gain the housing they desperately need.

A similar amendment was offered to a version of this bill in the last Congress. On October 3, 2005, Bishop DiMarzio wrote to then Speaker of the House J. Dennis Hastert urging the rejection of proposals to restrict eligibility for the affordable housing funds, which would have excluded most Catholic agencies.

“Proposals that would limit eligible recipients to organizations that have as their primary purpose the provision of affordable housing would effectively prevent Catholic dioceses, parishes and Catholic Charities agencies from participating in Affordable Housing Fund programs. Similarly, proposals that would prohibit recipients from engaging in voter registration and lobbying activities with their own funds during the period they are utilizing affordable housing funds would force Catholic agencies to choose between participating in Affordable Housing Fund programs or engaging in constitutionally protected voter registration and lobbying activities with their own funds.

“I urge you to oppose inclusion of these kinds of unnecessary limitations and prohibitions ... as [the bill] moves to the House floor for a vote. There are ample ways to write safeguards into the legislation to prevent the diversion of affordable housing funds to uses other than what they are intended without requiring recipients to forego their constitutionally protected rights as a condition for participating in Affordable Housing Fund programs.” (Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio letter on Affordable Housing Fund, October 3, 2005)
The USCCB urges a vote against these types of Amendments.

ACTION REQUESTED:

◆ Call Your Representative(s) and urge them to **support the inclusion of the Affordable Housing Fund in H.R. 1427.**

◆ [Rep. Neil Abercrombie](#) (808) 541-2570

◆ [Rep. Mazie Hirono](#) (808) 541-1986

◆ Ask them to **oppose the Hensarling Amendment #28** whose effect would exclude the Catholic Community from using these funds to help house low income families.