

NCH . NEWS . . .

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Hello,

This is the February edition of NCH News.

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[2006 Hate Crimes Report Released](#)

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Violent Crimes against the Homeless on the Rise

Washington, DC – Reported incidents of attacks against homeless men and women have reached their highest level in years, according to a study by the National Coalition for the Homeless. NCH's report, *Hate, Violence, and Death on Main Street USA: A Report on Hate Crimes and Violence Against People Experiencing Homelessness 2006*, details the 142 violent crimes, against homeless individuals in the past year, the highest number of incidents since NCH's annual study began in 1999. Attacks have increased 65% from last year, and over 170% since five years ago. This year's attacks, which include beatings, stabbings, burnings, and rape resulted in 20 fatalities

Even more disturbing than the violence of these attacks are the identities of the attackers and their motives. In a significant number of cases, the crimes were committed by teenagers and young adults, for no apparent reason other than boredom. This March in Orlando, FL, August Felix, age 54, was beaten to death by five teenagers. The youths, all between the ages of 13 and 16, attacked Felix and others "for sport," according to local police. Later that same month, 21-year-old Braymond Harris of Detroit was shot and killed by a 15-year-old boy. In the words of one Detroit police officer, the boy and his friends "just wanted to beat up a bum."

"It is NCH's position that many of these acts should be considered hate crimes" said Michael Stoops, Executive Director of NCH. "Crimes against homeless people are motivated by the same intolerance as hate crimes against people of a certain religious, racial, or ethnic background."

Currently, federal law does not list housing status as potential motivation for a hate crime, though NCH and others are gaining ground in their battle to add homelessness to new hate crimes legislation. Such bills have been introduced into five state legislatures: California, Florida, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, and Texas.

For the complete report, as well as those of past years, visit www.nationalhomeless.org

Fort Meyers Attempts Anti-Feeding Laws

The city of Fort Myers, Florida, recently attempted to pass an ordinance that would make the distribution of food to the homeless in public parks next to impossible for charity organizations. Organizations such as Food Not Bombs and local churches often serve meals free of charge to the homeless in Centennial Park, Fort Myers. This is a great service to the local homeless community. However, the proposed ordinance would make it necessary for organizations distributing food to groups of ten or more people to obtain a special events permit from the city recreation manager. If the application for the permit were to be approved, the recreation manager would, by law, limit the distribution of food to the homeless in the park to two times per year, per organization. However, this application would be susceptible to disapproval by the city recreation manager, keeping organizations from serving food to the homeless entirely. Needless to say, the homeless population and advocates for the homeless in Fort Myers and across the country were outraged at this proposal.

On Tuesday, January 16th, the Fort Myers City Council held a hearing where this ordinance was highly criticized. Opposing arguments were given by groups such as the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, and the National Coalition for the Homeless. The city council was also warned of the threat of impending lawsuits, as the ordinance would be infringing on the religious freedom of churches to give to the poor in accordance with their beliefs. The city council was challenged by homeless advocates to modify the ordinance so that it did not make feeding the homeless in public parks a nearly impossible thing to do. Also protesting the rights of the homeless at the hearing, Christina Skibicki, a local soup kitchen volunteer, dressed in a full-body squirrel costume to protest the ordinance. This made a statement to the council; if it is legal to feed squirrels without a permit, why not the homeless? Jim Humphrey, the mayor of Fort Myers, decided that the council should not make a decision on whether or not to pass the ordinance at this time, but rather should revisit the issue on March 19th. This would give the council members as well as the general public time to formulate an alternative solution to the ordinance, as all but one of the council members believe that there should be some type of restriction on public feedings in the park. Delaying and possibly preventing the proposal from becoming law was a huge victory for the homeless and their advocates in Fort Myers and across the nation.

President's FY08 Budget Released

Reps. Waters and Frank Statement on President's Fiscal Year 2008 Budget

For Immediate Release: February 5, 2007

Contact: Steve Adamske, 202-225-7141 or Heather Wong 202-226-3314

Washington, DC - Rep. Maxine Waters (D-CA), Chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Housing Community and Opportunity, and Rep. Barney Frank (D-MA), Chairman of the House Committee on Financial Services, released the following statement today on President Bush's budget and Supplemental Appropriations request:

"There is a housing crisis in America. It is inconceivable that the President's budget would reduce support for low and moderate income families rather than expand affordable housing opportunities for those truly in need," said Rep. Waters.

"The President has said he wants to be conciliatory and work with Democrats, but today he released his budget where it is apparent he intends to do even more damage to people in need. The President has now adopted the argument that the nation must sacrifice at a time of war, but based on his housing budget, only those that are the most in need and the most vulnerable, should sacrifice," said Rep. Frank. "It is now clear the president is choosing to cut assistance to those in need and resources to our cities and communities in order to finance the tax cuts and the war in Iraq."

Summary of Cuts:

Public Housing: Approximately a \$450 million net cut of 7% for public housing. Big cut in capital repair (which more than offsets a slight increase in the Operating fund), and rescission of \$99 million for the HOPE VI housing program.

Section 8 vouchers: A mere \$9 million increase for voucher renewal funding vs. the Concurrent Resolution passed last week [out of a total renewal budget of \$14.45 billion]. Thus, the amount does not include an inflation adjustment - which would translate into approximately a \$500 million cut, compared to the vouchers being funded in the CR.

Community Development Block Grants [CDBG]. A \$736 million cut [20%], compared to last year

Section 811 Disabled Housing: A \$112 million cut [47%] compared to last year

Section 202 Elderly Housing: A \$160 million cut [22%] compared to last year

Lead Paint Prevention: A \$34 million cut [23%] compared to last year

Zero funding for Brownfields Redevelopment, Rural and Economic Development Grants, and CDBG Section 108 loans

Rural Housing also took a beating in the President's Budget. The primary RHS budget cuts are:

Section 515 multifamily direct loan program. Zero funding compared to \$100 million last year.

Section 502 single family direct loan program. Zero funding compared to \$ 125 million (budget authority) last year.

Section 523 Self-help housing grant program. A \$24 million cut -- reduced from \$34 million to \$10 million.

Section 514/516 farm labor housing direct loan/grant programs. A \$21 million cut - reduced from \$31 million to \$10 million.

Overall the RHS budget is reduced by \$175 million, which amounts to a one third cut in the entire RHS budget over the last six years. RHS is eliminating programs that serve the very poor (direct loan programs) and focusing on programs that serve moderate income (guarantee loan programs).

New LGBT Report Released

New report reveals epidemic of homelessness among lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth

January 30, 2007

More than 500,000 LGBT youth in the United States at risk of homelessness this winter

Disproportionate impact: 3 to 5% of U.S. population identifies as gay or lesbian, yet up to 40% of homeless youth identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender

“It is a national disgrace that 20 to 40 percent of homeless youth are lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender. It is a further disgrace that federal programs that assist homeless young people have been pitifully underfunded. The Task Force calls on the president and the new Congress — as they begin this Monday to focus on the federal budget — to address the unmet social service needs of all vulnerable Americans. That means recognizing and addressing the epidemic of homelessness among lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth.” — **Matt Foreman, Executive Director, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force**

“This report brings attention to the dangers and inequalities faced by LGBT homeless youth, who make up a disproportionate percentage of the homeless youth population. It will enlighten the public on the needs of this traditionally underserved group and promote positive policy change at both the state and federal levels.” — **Michael Stoops, Acting Executive Director, National Coalition for the Homeless**

WASHINGTON, Jan. 30 — According to a new report, *Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth: An epidemic of homelessness*, released nationally today by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force in collaboration with the National Coalition for the Homeless, between 20 and 40 percent of homeless youth identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender.

Given that approximately 3 to 5 percent of the U.S. population identifies as gay or lesbian, these figures are grossly disproportionate. Nationwide, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, each year between 570,000 and 1.6 million youth run away or are homeless. This means that between 320,000 and 640,000 of these youth are LGBT.

Through a comprehensive analysis of the available research and professional literature, the report responds to basic questions, including why so many LGBT youth are becoming and remaining homeless. It addresses the harassment and violence that many of these youth experience in existing public shelter system, and summarizes research on critical problems affecting these youth, including mental health issues, substance abuse and risky sexual behavior. The report also analyzes government responses to youth homelessness and the specific impact on LGBT homeless youth of federal funding for faith-based service providers.

“It is a national disgrace that 20 to 40 percent of homeless youth are lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender. It is a further disgrace that federal programs that assist homeless young people have been pitifully underfunded. The Task Force calls on the president and the new Congress — as they begin this Monday to focus on the federal budget — to address the unmet social service needs of all vulnerable Americans. That means recognizing and addressing the epidemic of homelessness among lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth,” said Matt Foreman, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

“This report brings attention to the dangers and inequalities faced by LGBT homeless youth, who make up a disproportionate percentage of the homeless youth population. It will enlighten the public on the needs of this traditionally underserved group and promote positive policy change at both the state and federal levels,” said Michael Stoops, acting executive director of the National Coalition for the Homeless.

Key findings revealed in the report include:

- Family conflict, including conflict over a youth’s sexual orientation or gender identity, is the primary cause for young people becoming homeless. In one study, 50 percent of gay male teens who came out to their parents experienced a negative reaction and 26 percent of them were told they must leave home.
- LGBT youth report experiencing discrimination, harassment and violence at shelters and from service providers. For example, one facility in Michigan forced youth who identified as or were perceived as being LGBT to wear orange jumpsuits.
- LGBT homeless youth are more likely to suffer from mental health issues and substance abuse than are their heterosexual peers, and are more likely to be victimized by sexual predators.

“The most striking point to emerge from this study is the extent to which lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth are disproportionately represented in the overall homeless youth population,” said Nick Ray, author of the report. “This is a community in crisis. This community has been underfunded and ill-served by the federal government and many service providers. It reveals the critical nature of LGBT homeless youths’ circumstances.”

Five chapters in the report highlight model programs: the Ruth Ellis Center in Detroit, Mich.; Urban Peak in Denver, Colo.; Waltham House in Waltham, Mass.; Green Chimneys in New York City and Ozone House in Ann Arbor, Mich.

“Ruth Ellis Center is proud to participate in this policy paper with the Task Force. Having worked in this field for 23 years, I have never seen a more comprehensive and practical publication on the subject of working with LGBTQ youth,” said Grace McClelland, executive director of the Ruth Ellis Center.

“LGBTQ youth are at great risk for homelessness and, when homeless, they are at greater risk than their peers for harassment, assault, drug use and other destructive experiences. It’s up to not only the adult LGBT community, but all of us to face this situation...bethesdahosting.com/.../397_2007...

assault, drug use and other destructive experiences. It's up to not only the adult LGBT community, but all of us to face this situation — the cost of not addressing it is too high," said Theresa Nolan, division director of NYC Programs at Green Chimneys Children's Services.

The report concludes with critical public policy recommendations including:

- Establishing funding streams to provide housing options for all homeless youth and requiring that recipients of these funds are committed to the safe and appropriate treatment of LGBT homeless youth.
- Permitting dedicated shelter and housing for LGBT youth.
- Extending comprehensive health insurance and services through the age of 24 to all low-income youth via Medicaid.
- Requiring all agencies that seek public funding and licensure to serve homeless youth to adopt nondiscrimination policies for LGBT youth.
- Mandating LGBT awareness training as a part of the professional licensing process for all health care, social service, child welfare and juvenile justice agency staff.

Update of Joint Funding Resolution

Last December, 9 of 11 appropriation bills failed to pass before the end of the 109th Congress. David Obey (D-WI), House Appropriations Chair and Robert Byrd (D-WV), Senate Appropriations Chair, announced that the remaining FY07 bills would be passed via a long-term joint resolution. This resolution, which includes all HUD funding, was determined to set FY07 appropriation levels at the FY07 level, unless doing so had "cataclysmic" consequences.

On January 29th, the resolution passed the house, seeing an increase of 110 million for McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Programs. FY06 funding levels for HUD Homeless Assistance levels were at an all time low. It was estimated that without an increase in HUD funding, 14,000 Americans would remain homeless. However, thanks to individual and organizational lobbying efforts, HUD is required to submit to the House and Senate Appropriations Committees "a spending, expenditure, or operating plan for fiscal year 2007 at a level of detail below the account level" within 30 days of the bill's enactment. On February 13th, the Senate passed cloture on the bill which shows a good chance that the bill will pass with no or little amendments.

Among the Homeless Programs which will be exempt from FY07 levels are: project based section 8 housing, housing choice vouchers, public housing, supportive housing for the elderly and homeless assistance grants. Below is a more detailed account of the resolutions provisions for homeless programs.

While the joint resolution fails to provide the funds to realistically end homelessness in America, it is a much needed step in realizing that current federal funding levels are grossly inadequate for homeless and housing services.

Homeless Assistance Programs affected by the Joint Resolution:

Project-Based Section 8

The resolution provides an increase of \$939 million for Section 8 project-based contract renewals. This increase will allow HUD to renew all of the Section 8 contracts that expire in FY07. The resolution also extends the mark to market program, which reduces long-term subsidy costs while

preserving project-based affordable housing. The program sunsetted on September 30, 2006; the

resolution extends the program until September 30, 2011.

Public Housing

5/15/2009

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The resolution increases funding for the public housing operating fund by \$300 million, the amount of shortfall in this account in FY06. The increase will allow housing authorities to be reimbursed by HUD for an estimated 84.5% of their operating costs; the current rate of funding is at 76% of what HUD knows public housing authorities need to operate their 1.2 million public housing units. The resolution extends the HOPE VI public housing revitalization program, which expired on September 30, 2006. The resolution extends HOPE VI until September 30, 2007.

Homeless Assistance Grants

The resolution increases homeless assistance grants by \$115 million. Homeless assistance programs are also authorized until September 30, 2007.

CDBG

While the resolution makes a number of changes to the Community Development Fund, mostly by eliminating

For additional information visit the National Low Income Housing Coalition's website: www.nlihc.org

NCH on the Road

Stay up-to-date on NCH's upcoming speaking events throughout the county

February

Faces of Homelessness Speakers' Bureau:

The Faces of Homelessness Speakers' Bureau is a program of the National Coalition for the Homeless that is comprised of people who are or have been homeless and works to educate the public about homelessness and what can be done to end it.

February 9th 11th National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homeless East Coast Conference at Boston University

February 20th Lehigh University in Bethlehem, PA

In addition, NCH will be speaking at 20 events throughout the DC/VA/MD area

In 2005 we spoke to over 280 groups, 43 states and nearly 17,000 people. If you are interested in bringing our Faces of Homelessness Panel to your school, please contact Michael O'Neill, Speakers' Bureau Coordinator, at moneill@nationalhomeless.org.

Other NCH Speaking Events:

February 7 Testifying before the Maryland State Legislature in Annapolis for a bill that would add homelessness to the state's hate crimes law

5/15/2009

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February 8

Homelessness Forum in Tallahassee

February 9

Right to Housing conference in Tallahassee

February 15 and 16

National Network on Tobacco Prevention & Poverty, San Diego

February 18 and 19

Sleep Out in front of the State Capitol in Carson City, NV;
a housing bill in front of the State Legislature

testifying on

NCH News

Founded in 1982, NCH is a national network of people who are currently experiencing or have experienced homelessness, activists and advocates, community-based and faith-based service providers, and others committed to a single mission. That mission, our common bond, is to end homelessness. NCH is committed to creating the systemic and attitudinal changes necessary to prevent and end homelessness by involving people who have formerly or are currently experiencing homelessness in all of our work.

A tax-deductible donation to NCH brings tangible results that help protect homeless people and promote social justice. Our work is innovative, cost-effective, and is creating a documented paradigm shift in how homeless people everywhere are viewed by society. A gift of \$75, \$100, \$150, \$250 or whatever you can afford will enable our critically needed work to go on. Giving to NCH has never been easier. Please log onto our secure website, www.nationalhomeless.org for additional information and to donate online.

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