

Capitol Hill Day 2010: Report and Summary

National Alliance to End Homelessness

August 2010

Executive Summary

Every year, Capitol Hill Day – held in conjunction with the Alliance’s annual *National Conference on Ending Homelessness* – offers a time for people from across the country to meet with their U.S. Senators and Representatives and their staff members. Capitol Hill Day 2010 was a monumental success, with a record number of people and states visiting their congressional offices and an identifiable impact on numerous areas of federal policy related to homelessness. State Captains from 40 states and Guam rallied over 340 Hill Day participants and organized nearly 230 Congressional meetings. Participants met with the offices of a remarkably high percentage of Members of Congress who sit on key committees such as the Labor, Health and Human Services (HHS), and Education Appropriations Subcommittees; the Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development (T-HUD) Appropriations Subcommittees; and the Veterans Affairs Committees.

Participants focused on key priorities such as funding for HUD’s McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants, Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Homeless Services programs, Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs, and the National Housing Trust Fund. They also shared their view on comprehensive legislation to end homelessness among veterans.

Only a few weeks after Capitol Hill day, the results of these meetings are already emerging. Less than one week after Capitol Hill Day, the House Appropriations Committee upped the recommended funding level for the McKinney-Vento program by \$145 million. Given that Capitol Hill Day participants provided information on the need for increased funding of McKinney-Vento programs to over 110 Congressional offices, this increase was welcome news!

Other results include nearly a dozen Members of Congress and staff members who have committed to touring local homeless assistance programs in the coming months, with dozens more invited. Further details on the success and results of Capitol Hill Day are available in the following pages.

Introduction

Every year, Capitol Hill Day provides people from across the country with an opportunity to take part in federal education and advocacy by meeting with their U.S. Senators and Representatives to discuss the importance of ending homelessness. There is no better group to act as the voice of the movement to eradicate homelessness than these national and local experts, including providers, city leaders, state government employees, people with the experience of homelessness, and advocates. They can speak first-hand about the scope of homelessness and the successful interventions being implemented in their communities.

As a result, Capitol Hill Day helps Congressional offices to understand the problem of homelessness and its solutions. This, in turn, equips them to improve federal homelessness programs and provide these programs with the level of funding communities across the nation need to achieve their goal of ending homelessness.

On Capitol Hill Day 2010, held July 14, 2010, State Captains representing 40 states and Guam organized nearly 230 congressional meetings involving nearly 350 Capitol Hill Day participants. This report includes an overview of Capitol Hill Day 2010, a list of the 2010 Capitol Hill Day policy priorities, a review of some of the key offices with which advocates met, and a summary of the impact that advocates' meetings have already had on federal policy. Though the results of these meetings are already being seen, the full extent of their impact will not be apparent for months to come.

Capitol Hill Day 2010 at a Glance

Highlights

- 78 State Captains representing 40 states and Guam;
- Over 340 participants;
- 230 congressional meetings; and
- More than 45 in-person meetings with a Member of Congress.

Federal Policy Priorities

- Provide \$2.4 billion in FY 2011 for HUD's Homeless Assistance Grants Program;
- Fund 200,000 new Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers in FY 2011, including:
 - 10,000 new HUD-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) vouchers; and
 - 10,000 vouchers for the Administration's proposed *Housing and Services for Homeless Persons Demonstration* (Demonstration).
- Provide \$120 million for SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) Homeless Services Programs in FY 2011, including \$15.8 million for the Administration's proposed Demonstration;
- Provide \$165 million in FY 2011 for Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs, including:
 - An additional \$35 million for the Transitional Living Program (total of \$79 million);

- An additional \$10 million toward Basic Centers (total of \$64 million); and
- \$4 million for a homeless youth incidence study.
- Pass the Zero Tolerance for Veterans Homelessness Act (S. 1547); and
- Provide a \$1 billion capitalization of the National Housing Trust Fund (NHTF).

Table 1
Meetings Held with Congressional Offices of Members on Key Committees

	Senate T-HUD Subcmte	Senate HHS Subcmte	Senate VA Cmte	House T-HUD Subcmte	House HHS Subcmte	House VA Cmte
	Murray	Harkin	Akaka	Olver	Lowey	Filner
	Mikulski	Inouye	Murray	Pastor	DeLauro	Brown*
	Durbin	Murray	Brown	Rodriguez	Kennedy	Snyder*
	Harkin	Landrieu	Webb	Price	Roybal-Allard	Michaud*
	Feinstein	Durbin	Tester	Roybal-Allard	Lee	Mitchell
	Johnson	Reed	Begich	Berry	McCollum	Hall
	Lautenberg	Pryor	Burr	Kilpatrick	Moran	Halvorson*
	Specter	Specter	Specter	Latham	Tiahrt	Perriello*
	Bond	Hutchinson	Burr	Wolf	Rehberg	Teague*
	Bennett	Alexander	Isakson	Carter	Alexander	Rodriguez*
	Hutchinson		Johanns		Cole	Donnelly*
	Alexander					McNerney*
	Collins					Adler
	Voinovich					Buyer
						Stearns*
						Moran*
						Boozman*
						Bilbray
						Bilirakis*
						Buchanan*
						Roe
Number of Cmte Members Visited	14	10	11	10	11	21 (14*)
Total Number of Cmte Members	19	14	15	12	17	29 (16*)

*Also sits on Health Subcommittee

Table 2

Number of Congressional Offices with Whom Each 2010 Policy Priority Was Discussed

Policy Priorities	Number of Offices
McKinney-Vento (HEARTH)	129
Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers	72
SAMHSA Homeless Services	31
Runaway and Homeless Youth	18
Veterans Homelessness	56
National Housing Trust Fund	41

Participation by Conference Attendees

- At least 340 people from 40 states and Guam participated in Capitol Hill Day. This represents more than 1 in 4 people who attended the conference.
- 8 states had a 100 percent participation rate, with every single conference registrant from that state participating in Capitol Hill Day 2010: Connecticut (45/45), Hawaii (9/9), Arkansas (2/2), Montana (2/2), Nevada (2/2), Idaho (1/1), New Mexico (1/1), and South Dakota (1/1).
- Other states with high participation rates include Guam (67 percent), Maine (61 percent), Indiana (60 percent), Rhode Island (60 percent), Nebraska (57 percent), Arizona (50 percent), Iowa (50 percent), Utah (48 percent), Georgia (45 percent), and Colorado (44 percent).

District Visits

Capitol Hill Day participants invited more than 60 offices to visit programs in their District over the coming months. To date, at least **9 congressional offices** have confirmed their intentions to **visit a local program** or attend a specific event in the district.

- Representatives Larsen (WA) and Neal (MA) have already attended local programs or events.
- Senator Burr (NC) has agreed to visit a local program.
- Representative Watt (NC) agreed to visit a local program in his district.
- Staff members for Senators Collins (ME), Hagan (NC), and Hatch (UT) all plan to visit local programs over the coming months.
- Staff members for Representatives Kissell (NC), Bishop (UT), and Schock (IL) have agreed to visit local homelessness assistance programs in August.

Congressional Receptions

Participants from two states – Connecticut and New Jersey – hosted receptions for their congressional delegations.

- More than 45 participants from Connecticut, led by Diane Randall and Meghan Quinn of the Partnership for Strong Communities and Lisa Sementilli and Caroline DiPietro of the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness, hosted a reception on Capitol Hill in the Rayburn House Office Building to highlight the need for additional housing and services funding, more rental vouchers, and increased funding to build and rehabilitate

affordable housing. Representatives Courtney (CT), Himes (CT), DeLauro (CT), and Murphy (CT) attended and spoke at the reception.

- New Jersey participants, led by Joyce Campbell from Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton and Alison Recca-Ryan of the Corporation for Supportive Housing, hosted a reception for four Members of Congress who had received an “A” rating on an annual report card put together by New Jersey Advocacy Network to End Homelessness. The report card scores legislators based on their votes on key pieces of legislation related to homelessness. Approximately 40-45 people attended the reception, held on Capitol Hill in the Russell Senate Building, including Representative Holt (NJ) and the staff member who works on housing issues for Senator Menendez (NJ).

Progress on 2010 Capitol Hill Day Priorities

HUD Appropriations

Priorities

- Provide \$2.4 billion in FY 2011 for HUD’s Homeless Assistance Grants Program; and
- Fund 200,000 new Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers in FY 2011, including:
 - 10,000 new HUD-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) vouchers; and
 - 10,000 vouchers for the Administration’s proposed *Housing and Services for Homeless Persons Demonstration*.

Capitol Hill Day Action

- Capitol Hill Day participants met with the offices of 14 out of the 19 members of the Senate Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development (T-HUD) Appropriations Subcommittee. They also met with the offices of 10 out of the 12 House T-HUD Appropriations Subcommittee members. Capitol Hill Day participants discussed the importance of providing \$2.4 billion for McKinney-Vento programs with **about 130 congressional offices**.
- Capitol Hill Day participants discussed the importance of providing additional Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers, including funding for the HUD-VASH program and the proposed demonstration, with **more than 70 congressional offices**.

Accomplishments

- **Less than one week after Capitol Hill Day**, the House Appropriations Committee took the unusual step of *increasing* the funding level of HUD’s McKinney-Vento Program to **\$2.2 billion**: a 7 percent increase over the amount passed by the T-HUD Appropriations Subcommittee (\$2.055 billion), and an **18 percent increase** over the FY 2010 level. On July 29, the full House approved \$2.2 billion for McKinney-Vento programs in FY 2011.
- The Senate Appropriations Committee has proposed a funding level of \$2.055 billion for McKinney-Vento programs in FY 2011 – a 10 percent increase over FY 2010.
- Both the Senate Appropriations Committee and the full House have recommended setting aside \$75 million to provide 10,000 additional HUD-VASH vouchers, as well as \$85 million to provide 10,000 new vouchers for the *Housing and Services for Homeless*

Persons Demonstration. However, neither the House nor the Senate recommended funding for a substantial number of new Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers.

- During a site visit shortly after Capitol Hill Day, Representative Larsen (WA) agreed to write to House T-HUD Subcommittee Chairman Olver (MA) and Ranking Member Latham (IA) urging them to support the higher of the funding levels proposed by the House and Senate for McKinney-Vento programs when each version of the FY 2011 HUD appropriations bills heads to a conference committee to iron out the differences.
- Representative Lee (CA) agreed to support the higher of the funding levels proposed by the House and Senate for McKinney-Vento programs when their versions of the bills head to a conference committee.
- Representative Lynch (MA) expressed interest in sending a letter to House Appropriations Committee Chairman Obey (WI) in support of funding McKinney-Vento programs at \$2.4 billion in FY 2011.
- Representative Neal (MA) agreed to personally call House Appropriations Committee Chairman Obey (WI) to express his support for providing \$2.4 billion for McKinney-Vento programs.
- Senator Brown (OH) reiterated his support for providing \$2.4 billion for McKinney-Vento programs and agreed to talk with his colleagues about also supporting this funding level.
- Senator Webb (VA) expressed an interest in working with local advocates to convene a group of public housing authorities, local nonprofits, and VA representatives to discuss HUD-VASH funding in Virginia and how to streamline the rapid re-housing process.
- Massachusetts State Captains, including Jeffrey Naylor of Homes for Families, Doug Tetrault of the Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance, and Leah Bradley of Community HealthLink, Inc., wrote and organized a sign-on letter to deliver to Senator Brown (MA). The letter urged Senator Brown to support a funding level of \$2.4 billion for McKinney-Vento programs, to support the provision of new Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers, and to support the provision of an additional 10,000 HUD-VASH vouchers. A total of 81 organizations in Massachusetts signed onto the letter.

HHS Appropriations

Priorities

- Provide \$120 million for SAMHSA Homeless Services Programs in FY 2011, including \$15.8 million for the Administration's proposed Housing and Services Demonstration; and
- Provide \$165 million in FY 2011 for Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) Programs, including:
 - An additional \$35 million targeted at the Transitional Living Program (total of \$79 million);
 - An additional \$10 million targeted at Basic Centers (total of \$64 million); and
 - \$4 million toward a homeless youth incidence study.

Capitol Hill Day Actions

- Capitol Hill Day participants met with the offices of 10 out of the 14 members of the Senate Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education (HHS) Appropriations

- Subcommittee. They also met with the offices of 11 out of the 17 House HHS Appropriations Subcommittee members.
- Capitol Hill Day participants discussed the importance of providing \$120 million for SAMHSA Homeless Services programs with **more than 30 congressional offices**.
 - Capitol Hill Day participants discussed the importance of making \$165 million available for RHYA programs with **at least 18 congressional offices**.

Accomplishments

- The Senate Appropriations Committee recommended a funding level of \$123.7 million for RHYA programs – an \$8 million increase over FY 2010.
- The Senate Appropriations Committee recommended providing \$159.4 million for substance abuse and mental health services targeting people experiencing homelessness – a \$17 million increase. This includes funding for the Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) program and the SAMHSA Homeless Services programs.
- Representative Lee (CA) agreed to support the higher of the funding levels proposed by the House and Senate for SAMHSA Homeless Services programs when their respective versions of the FY 2011 HHS appropriations bills head to a conference committee to iron out the differences.
- Representative Klein (FL) told advocates that he is interested in co-sponsoring the Services to End Long-Term Homelessness Act (SELHA - S. 1523 / H.R. 3636), which would authorize funding for a flexible array of services in permanent supportive housing, focused on helping people move toward recovery and self sufficiency.
- Representative Oberstar (MN) expressed an interest in joining a sign-on letter in support of providing \$165 million for RHYA programs in FY 2011.

Legislation to End Homelessness among Veterans

Priorities

- Pass comprehensive legislation, such as S. 1237 – which includes the Zero Tolerance for Veterans' Homelessness Act, to end homelessness among veterans. The legislation should:
 - Establish a comprehensive homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing program at VA;
 - Authorize an expansion of the Department of Housing and Urban Development-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program to serve 60,000 veterans and their families; and
 - Improve data collection on the extent of homelessness among veterans.

Capitol Hill Day Actions

- Capitol Hill Day participants met with the offices of 11 out of the 15 members of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee. They also met with the offices of 21 out of the 29 House VA Committee members, including the offices of 14 out of 16 members of the Health Subcommittee.

- Capitol Hill Day participants discussed the importance of comprehensive legislation to end homelessness among veterans, such as the Zero Tolerance for Veterans Homelessness Act (included in S. 1237), with **more than 55 congressional offices**

Accomplishments

- Representative Giffords (AZ) agreed to ask House Armed Services Committee Chairman Skelton (MO) about holding a hearing on legislative solutions to veteran homelessness.
- Representative Price (NC) offered to help set up and attend a meeting with North Carolina VA representatives and community members to streamline the state's response to homelessness among veterans.
- During a site visit shortly after Capitol Hill Day, Representative Larsen (WA) committed to sending a letter to House VA Health Subcommittee Chairman Michaud (ME) and Ranking Member Brown (SC) urging them to support comprehensive legislation, such as S. 1237, to end homelessness among veterans.

Affordable Housing Legislation

Priority

- Provide a \$1 billion Capitalization of the National Housing Trust Fund (NHTF).

Capitol Hill Day Actions

- Capitol Hill Day participants met with the offices of 11 of the members of the Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Development Committee. They also met with the offices of 24 of the House Financial Services Committee members.
- Capitol Hill Day participants discussed the importance of providing a \$1 billion capitalization of the NHTF with **more than 40 congressional offices**.

Highlights of Accomplishments

- Representatives Maloney (NY) and Serrano (NY) expressed interest in generating a "Dear Colleague" letter among their fellow representatives to the Senate about the importance of providing \$1 billion for the NHTF.
- Representative Kanjorski (PA) agreed to help push legislation to fund the NHTF.

Conclusion

The full impact of Capitol Hill Day 2010 will unfold over the coming months, and the relationships fostered between local experts and Capitol Hill offices will extend even longer. However, it is already clear that the nearly 350 people who participated in the event have had a measureable impact on federal policy and have strengthened their relationships with their Members of Congress.

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