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The Nation's Housing Affordability Challenges

Two recently published reports illustrate the nation's growing affordability problems.

Report to Congress on Worst Case Needs (HUD 2011):

- Of the 17.1 million very low-income renters¹ in the United States, roughly 7.1 million spend more than half of their income on housing, live in substandard conditions, or both.
- Between 2007 and 2009, the number of very low-income renter households with worst case needs² **increased by 20 percent** – the largest two-year increase in the past 25 years.
- The number of households with worst case needs has **risen by nearly 42 percent since 2001**.
- **Increased competition for affordable units, falling incomes, and a shortage of rental assistance** are the primary factors in the recent increase in worst case needs.
- Only **60 affordable and adequate units were available** for every 100 very low-income renters in 2009.

Housing Landscape 2011 (Center for Housing Policy 2011):

- **Nearly one in four working households³ had a severe housing cost burden in 2009.** More than 10.5 million working households experienced this cost burden – an increase of 600,000 households in only one year.
- **Housing affordability declined substantially for working renters across the country,** between 2008 and 2009. The number of working households with a severe housing cost burden increased significantly in 25 states between 2008 and 2009, while no states saw a statistically significant decrease.

¹ Very low-income renters earn no more than 50 percent of the local median income.

² As defined in the HUD report, households with “worst case needs” are very low-income renters who do not receive rental assistance and (a) spend more than half of their income on housing, (b) live in severely substandard conditions, or (c) experience both conditions.

³ The Center for Housing Policy report defines “working households” as owners and renters who work an average of at least 20 hours per week and have incomes at or below 120 percent of the local median income.

For complete references and up-to-date
fact sheets on *why housing matters*, visit
<http://www.nhc.org/Factsheets.html>.

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