



NHC Member Brief



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Weekly update from the National Housing Conference

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Effectively communicating housing solutions

Next month, NHC will host our 5th convening of [Solutions for Housing Communications 2020](#). [Registration](#) for this critically important event is far ahead of last year, so if you already registered, thank you. For those who haven't yet, please take a minute to learn why you or your communications and policy staff need to attend. As the housing affordability crisis continues to worsen, more middle-income Americans are finding it difficult to rent or own a home of their own, especially where good jobs are most prevalent. For lower income people across the country, the crisis is acute, resulting in record numbers of homeless, and growing numbers of working homeless. You know this, but policymakers need to hear it again and again, from you, your stakeholders, the media, and elected officials. Our ability to effectively communicate solutions to these problems is existential to our work – and our success.

Solutions for Housing Communications is the only event in the nation that is specifically geared towards housing communicators, but all housing professionals can benefit from attending. Join together with housing professionals from across the country for a full day of sessions on promising communications strategies and tactics to help expand awareness of the benefits of affordable housing and build support for affordable housing policies and development. The audience at #SolutionsComms represents the entire housing spectrum from affordable housing developers, government agencies, lenders to advocacy coalitions. Between 200-300 people are expected to attend.

[Continue here](#)

News from Washington | By Tristan Bréaux and Quinn Mulholland

FHFA hires adviser to help with releasing GSEs from conservatorship

The FHFA [announced](#) on Monday that the agency hired the investment bank Houlihan Lokey Capital, Inc. to advise on the release of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac from conservatorship. "Hiring a financial advisor is a significant milestone toward ending the conservatorships of the Enterprises," FHFA Director Mark Calabria said in a statement, adding, "The next major milestone for FHFA is the re-proposal of the capital rule, which will happen in the near future." Calabria also [recently announced](#) a realignment of the agency's management structure to prepare for the end of conservatorship, establishing three new offices, hiring a new Deputy Director for the Division of Enterprise Regulation, and promoting several key officials, among other things. While the FHFA was continuing to lay the groundwork for the end of the GSEs' conservatorship, a group of Democratic Senators [sent a letter](#) on Monday to the chief executives of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, requesting information on the steps that each GSE has taken to prepare

Trump touts Opportunity Zones program in State of the Union

In his State of the Union address on Tuesday, President Trump [proclaimed the success](#) of the opportunity zones program, part of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act that he signed into law in 2017. “Jobs and investments are pouring into 9,000 previously neglected neighborhoods thanks to Opportunity Zones,” Trump said in his speech, adding, “Wealthy people and companies are pouring money into poor neighborhoods or areas that haven’t seen investment in many decades.” Trump’s remarks on the Opportunity Zones drew praise from the [National Multifamily Housing Council](#) and the [National Association of REALTORS®](#). The program, however, has come under criticism from some advocates and elected officials who argue that it is a windfall for the wealthy and does not actually benefit the communities it aims to serve. Representative Rashida Tlaib (D-Mich.), who has introduced legislation to repeal the Opportunity Zones program, [tweeted](#) “Opportunity Zones are just another corporate handout that don’t actually help the communities that desperately need resources.” After the State of the Union, Trump [visited Charlotte](#) on Friday for the North Carolina Opportunity Now Summit, where he again touted the program.

House, Senate hold hearings on housing

Congressional committees in the House and Senate held several hearings last week on housing-related issues. On Wednesday, two House subcommittees held hearings on the Trump administration’s housing policy: the [House Financial Services Subcommittee on Housing, Community Development, and Insurance](#) on the Trump administration’s cuts to public housing and the [House Oversight Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties](#) on the Trump administration’s efforts to roll back fair housing regulations. Also on Wednesday, the Senate Finance Committee [held a confirmation hearing](#) at which the committee confirmed President Trump’s nomination of Kipp Kranbuhl to be the Assistant Secretary for Financial Markets at the Treasury Department. On Thursday morning, the full House Financial Services Committee [held its annual oversight hearing](#) on the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), at which Chairwoman Maxine Waters (D-Calif.) [criticized](#) CFPB Director Kathy Kraninger for, among other things, weakening reporting requirements under the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act. That afternoon, the Financial Services Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations [held a hearing](#) on potential astroturfing efforts to influence the recent proposal to modernize the Community Reinvestment Act.



Linda Mandolini named Housing Champion of 2020

Eden Housing President and NHC Board Chair Linda Mandolini [was recently named](#) the recipient of Housing Trust Silicon Valley’s annual Housing Champion Award for 2020. Mandolini was a founding member of Housing Trust and has worked at Eden Housing to promote and develop affordable housing since 1996. She also played a key role in helping to pass several major housing initiatives in California, including Proposition 46, Proposition 1c, and Propositions 1 and 2. “I am humbled to be recognized with the 2020 Affordable Housing Champion award. It is gratifying to be recognized by an organization that serves as a national model for public and private partnerships in solving the region’s affordable housing problem,” Mandolini told Housing Trust. She will be presented with the award at [Housing Trust’s Investor Briefing](#) at the Santa Clara Convention Center on Friday, March 13, from 10:30am to 1:00pm.

Senate Democrats criticize Marbut in letter

Senate Banking Committee Ranking Member Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) led Committee Democrats in [requesting information](#) from newly appointed U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) Executive Director Robert Marbut in a sharply worded letter sent on Jan. 30. In the letter, the Senators wrote, “We are troubled by reports of policies you have

HUD will seek increased funding to address radon in public housing

On Wednesday, the Oregonian [reported](#) that HUD has pledged to seek a “record amount” of money from Congress to combat hazards like radon gas in subsidized housing in a letter from Len Wolfson, an assistant secretary at HUD, to Senate Finance Committee Ranking Member Ron Wyden (D-Ore.). The letter came in

previously recommended to communities. These have included the rejection of evidence-based Housing First approaches, and the adoption of punitive policies that would prevent charities from providing food to people experiencing homelessness and require people to earn the right to sleep indoors at local shelters.” In a [recent interview](#) with the Wall Street Journal, Marbut expanded on his opposition to “Housing First” policies and other priorities. Meanwhile, over the past several weeks, the annual “Point-in-Time” homeless count took place to determine how many people are experiencing homelessness across the country on a given night, which determines, among other things how much aid communities get from HUD to address homelessness. In cities from [Chicago](#) to [Charlotte](#) to [Los Angeles](#), volunteers fanned out to count the number of people experiencing homelessness and distributed food and other aid.

response to [demands for HUD to take action](#) by a bipartisan group of 10 Senators, including Wyden, in the wake of [an Oregonian investigation](#) that found dangerous levels of radon in public housing projects across the country. After [weeks of not responding](#) to the group of Senators, during which additional lawmakers [including Senator Doug Jones \(D-Ala.\)](#) joined the calls for action, HUD Secretary Ben Carson [broke his silence](#) on the issue in a Jan. 31 interview in Alabama, saying HUD would ensure radon testing is completed by local housing authorities. Carson’s comments and the letter from Wolfson have done little to resolve many of the lawmakers’ concerns, with Wyden telling the Oregonian in a statement, “I expect to talk with Secretary Carson soon about that meeting, which must include both actual specifics of the additional funding I requested and serious consideration of senators’ ideas on how best to achieve safe public housing.”



Telling the story: Why housing is health care

Moderator



FRED KARNAS

Richmond Memorial Health Foundation

Speakers



DAVID ADAME

Chicanos Por La Causa, Inc.



ANDY MCMAHON

UnitedHealthCare Community & State



JOSEPH SCHILLING

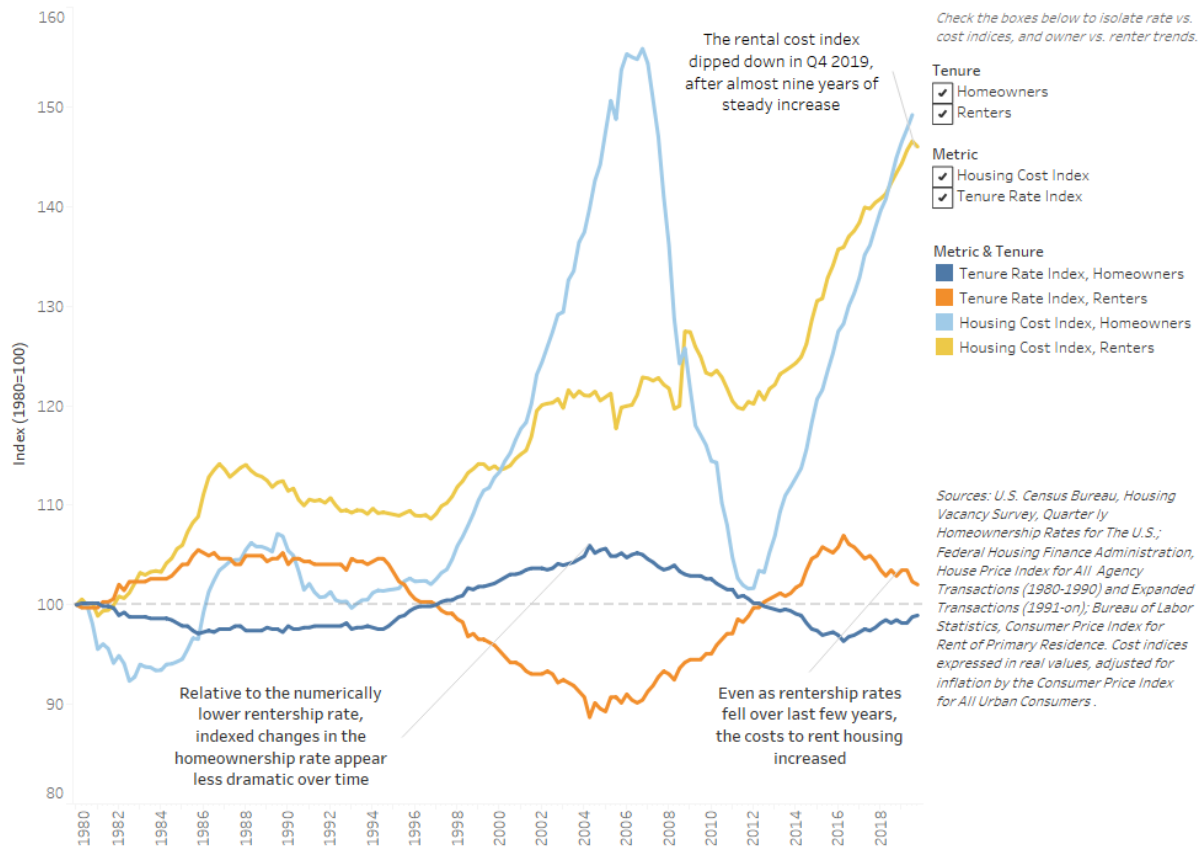
Urban Institute

#SolutionsComms

Chart of the Week

Homeownership reaches six-year high

Enterprise Community Partners’ [most recent Housing Tenure Trends report](#), based on new data from the Census Bureau, shows that the national homeownership rate has increased to 64.8 percent, its highest level since 2014. The report also showed, however, a sharp upward trajectory in rental and housing costs since 2012.



What we're reading

The **Wall Street Journal** reported on Tuesday that the FHFA is considering whether to allow the nationwide system of Federal Home Loan Banks to lend to nonbank mortgage institutions and real-estate investment trusts in order to fill the void left by commercial banks, which have cut back on mortgage lending. However, according to the article, some experts worry that those firms face less regulation and should not have access to taxpayer-subsidized funding. [Read the article here](#)

The **Urban Institute** published a feature article examining efforts to head off evictions before they happen in St. Paul. According to the article, the Ramsey County Housing Court Clinic, provides services for tenants at risk of eviction, has contributed to an 18 percent reduction in eviction judgments. [Read the article here](#).

A recent article in **CityLab** covered new research on where those displaced by sea level rise caused by climate change will go. The cities where these climate migrants will move to will likely face a housing crunch in the medium term, according to the article, which could lead to displacement. [Read the article here](#).

The week ahead

Sunday, February 9

- [MBA CREF/Multifamily Housing Convention & Expo](#), Feb. 9-12

Wednesday, February 12

- [House Financial Services Committee Task Force on Artificial Intelligence hearing on ways to reduce AI bias in financial services](#), 2-4 p.m. ET

Thursday, February 13

- [Habitat for Humanity symposium on home affordability](#), 11 a.m.-2:30 p.m. ET
- [NLIHC webinar on the Trump administration's latest attack on fair housing](#), 2-3 p.m. ET
- [New York City Housing Conference event with Peggy Bailey](#), 6-8 p.m. ET

Note: The Mortgage Bankers Association has posted two job openings for their affordable housing team. Please see the job descriptions below. The positions are excellent opportunities for young

professionals with a passion for affordable housing and a desire to help build our new affordable housing initiative.

- [Project Coordinator](#)
- [Policy & Program Specialist](#)

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The National Housing Conference has been defending the American Home since 1931. We believe everyone in America should have equal opportunity to live in a quality, affordable home in a thriving community. NHC convenes and collaborates with our diverse membership and the broader housing and community development sectors to advance our policy, research and communications initiatives to effect positive change at the federal, state and local levels. Politically diverse and nonpartisan, NHC is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

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Defending our American Home since 1931

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