



Sowers of Justice

Catholic Legislative Network

**Action
Alert**

*Proposed Affordable Housing
Fund Rules Threaten
Democracy*

October 21, 2005

Background: Members of the U.S. House of Representatives have reached a compromise that will bring the Affordable Housing Fund to the floor of the House of Representatives for a vote next week as part of the Government Sponsored Enterprises (GSE) regulatory reform legislation (H.R. 1461).

Unfortunately, the compromise would **prohibit non-profit organizations—including religious organizations—that do voter registration from applying for and receiving grants from the Affordable Housing Fund to build or preserve affordable housing.**

The language prohibits any non-profit organization from applying for the funding if it:

- does not have housing as its primary purpose;
- has engaged in any voter registration up to a year before application; and/or,
- maintains an affiliation with any organization that engages in voter registration.

For-profit entities are specifically exempted from these restrictions.

Bishop DiMarzio, Chairman of the Domestic Policy Committee of the United States Catholic Bishops wrote to Mr. Dennis Hastert, the Speaker of the House: "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 in H.R. 1461 as it moves to the House floor for a vote."

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Please contact your Representative today.

Call toll free **1-866-864-NHTF (6483)** and ask to speak to your Representative's Legislative Director or Housing Staff:

- Urge them to support the Affordable Housing Fund in the GSE legislation (HR 1461), but **without** restricting an organization's right to engage in voter registration.
- Urge them to oppose any language that restricts voter registration and freedom of affiliation by non-profit and public organizations when using their own funds.
- Urge your Representative to tell House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-IL) and Financial Services Chairman Mike Oxley (R-OH) to reject these restrictions and bring the bill to the floor for a vote without this language.

For further information, please contact Kathy Tomlin 651-291-4537.