

9/25/2007 - Sires Legislation To Improve Public Housing Management Approved By Committee

Bill would correct regulatory problems that led to layoffs in the 13th district

For Immediate Release

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(Washington, D.C.) - Today, Congressman Albio Sires' legislation that would improve the way public housing properties are managed was approved by the Financial Services Committee. H.R. 3521, the Public Housing Asset Management Improvement Act of 2007, would fix a regulation issued by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development that resulted in layoffs at Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) across the country.

"Asset Management can be a valuable tool that could help Public Housing Authorities operate more efficiently," said Congressman Sires. "Unfortunately, the Department's implementation was flawed and resulted in under funding and ultimately a loss of jobs in my district in Jersey City and across the country. This legislation would correct these flaws, protecting jobs and providing flexibility."

H.R. 3521 would do four things. First, it would exempt PHAs with fewer than 500 units from implementing asset management if they decide it would not be beneficial to their properties. This bill recognizes that small PHA's have few properties, resources, and staff, and see no economical or efficiency improvements from implementing the system. Second, it would require the Department and public housing advocates to renegotiate the funding formula for the operating fund using better data. Doing so will correct an error in the formula used by HUD that currently under funds some agencies by as much as 42 percent. Third, H.R. 3521 would restore the ability of PHA's to operate more efficiently by allowing them to move small amounts of funding between capital and operating funds to meet emerging needs. Finally, the bill recognizes that tenants must play a role in the implementation of asset management by requiring the Department to consider tenant participation when issuing any regulation or guidance on asset management.

"I am very happy that my colleagues understood that my bill would make for better housing, more efficient operations, and a less costly program for taxpayers. My bill would provide regulatory relief and flexible funding," said Sires. "This will ultimately result in a better life for the residents of public housing."

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