

News Release

National American Indian Housing Council

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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9 Indian Housing Leaders Protest Training and Technical Assistance Cuts

-32 year old program to be phased out by President's Budget

Washington DC – March 1, 2006 – Nine tribal housing leaders have come to Washington to ask the President's budget writers why they'd like to snuff out a 32-year-old program of training and technical assistance to Indian tribes, when 40 percent of Native Americans are still underhoused and 8 percent lack safe drinking water.

The group in question, the **National American Indian Housing Council (NAIHC)**, currently offers 45 different training programs*, compared to the 6 training courses from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Office of Native American Programs.

NAIHC's Chairman, Chester Carl, said, "NAIHC has demonstrated tremendous achievement with the investment Congress has provided to the organization. While the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act (NAHASDA) funding requires leveraging of federal funds, the recent HUD reports show that tribal housing authorities have been able to use private funds to supplement federal funds. The results did not come without any guidance or training and technical assistance from our program."

HUD Official Applauds Progress in Housing in Testimony

In addition to **NAIHC's** cuts, overall funding for Indian housing has declined with no increases for inflation, which leaves tribal housing groups without adequate funds for housing and infrastructure needs. According to recent Senate testimony by new head of HUD's Office of Indian and Public Housing Orlando Cabrera, during FY 2005 tribes and their housing authorities used Indian Housing Block Grant funds to **build, acquire or rehabilitate 1,050 rental units and 5,455 homeownership units**. "Each of these became a home to a Native American family."

Tribal housing authorities are making substantial progress and are increasing their capacity to comprehensively manage and grow their affordable housing programs, according to Cabrera. Cabrera also spoke at **NAIHC's** Legal Symposium in December, saying that he and HUD Secretary Alphonso Jackson are committed to improving homeownership in Indian Country. "Yet, the Bush Administration, which Cabrera and Jackson represent, have only level funded Indian housing programs and completely eliminated **NAIHC's** budget to help provide training and technical assistance to administer housing and homeownership programs," said **Gary L. Gordon, NAIHC Executive Director**.

Tribal Leaders Applaud NAIHC's Free Training

"NAIHC's programs are invaluable to many small tribes in my region," said **Milton Tybo, Executive Director of the Duck Valley Indian Housing Authority and NAIHC Board member** representing California and Nevada. Housing authorities in his region "each receive a small allocation of Native American Housing Block Grant (NAHBG) funding, which goes toward supporting housing operations and small staffs of employees with no money left to send them to training. **NAIHC's** special free training, and scholarships, help stretch their limited training dollars, to keep them up to speed on how to implement NAHASDA, promote homeownership, and operate a dynamic and efficient housing authority- much to the benefit their communities."

Native Americans 3x as overcrowded as Other Americans

Native Americans are three times more likely to live in overcrowded housing than other Americans and are more likely to lack basic sewage and water systems, telephone lines and electricity than other Americans. By zeroing out **NAIHC's** funding, the

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*Special Note: NAIHC training includes 13 courses that are not HUD funded, but are fee-based training.

proposed budget severely hinders cutting-edge training programs that assist tribal housing entities deal with these issues every year.

“NAIHC training ... is in-depth, comprehensive, and affordable,” said **Susan Hamer, Executive Director of the Ute Indian Housing Authority** in Utah and **NAIHC** Board member representing Montana, Wyoming, Utah and Colorado. “It keeps us up-to-date on technical and legislative issues, and gives us another place to go besides HUD.”

NAIHC trained thousands of people last year and provided over 751 scholarships to individuals from 220 tribes, awarding nearly **\$1 million** in scholarships over 18 months to attend NAHASDA-related training opportunities offered by **NAIHC** and HUD’s Office of Native American Programs.

Although Congress usually restores **NAIHC**’s funding, last year it was cut by \$2.6 million, making the President’s zero budget allocation a big threat. **NAIHC**’s technical assistance programs are integral to successful Indian housing programs. The success of these programs is dependent not only on the monies available for the programs, but also on tribal capacity to utilize those dollars and to leverage them effectively and efficiently.

NAIHC programs are particularly helpful in remote areas, especially in Alaska, according to **Marty Shuravloff, Executive Director of Kodiak Island Housing Authority** and **NAIHC** Board member representing the Alaska region. “Getting staff to training is also a severe challenge to the budget. **NAIHC** conducts some of its training in Anchorage, which helps us a lot. When we have to go to the lower 48, it is spendy, but **NAIHC**’s scholarship program helps tremendously. Take away **NAIHC**, and we’re left in the freezing cold.”

As the national group providing training, “**NAIHC** has played a key and irreplaceable role in the continuing development of our tribal housing programs,” said **Michael Cook, Administrator** for the **Oneida Nation** in New York and **NAIHC** Board member representing south and eastern tribes. “They provide training that no one else provides.” (In addition, the United South and Eastern Tribes regional housing association has recently passed a resolution requesting that HUD transfer their TA funding to **NAIHC**.)

“Providing housing in rural areas, frequently our greatest area of need, provides different challenges,” **Cook** continued. “**NAIHC** has modernized their training to incorporate new topics on homeownership and tax credits.... These trainings have begun the process of teaching our members how to leverage funds—which will be the only way to create adequate housing needed in our region, since funding will never be sufficient to provide for our neediest populations.”

A 2005 survey of **NAIHC** members found overwhelming support for its quality of services. **NAIHC** conducted hundreds of site visits, technical assistance calls and emails, and training sessions, including the new, highly in-demand courses on how to deal with methamphetamine labs in Indian country. **NAIHC** believes its track record of success and promise of assisting tribes in the future warrants funding of \$5 million in FY07 for technical assistance.

Indian Country’s Needs Still Come First

NAIHC continues to place a top priority on overall Indian housing funding needs. To meet the current housing and infrastructure demands, **NAIHC** estimates that at least **\$1.1 billion per year** in funding is needed for **NAHBG**. A reasonable start for FY07 would be **\$748 million**. The Budget Request proposes **\$625.7 million**, a one-year gap of **\$122 million**.

Tribal housing leaders from across the country explained that “**NAIHC** training programs, in conjunction with our Research and Communications programs, are vitally important to Indian housing authorities,” **NAIHC**’s **Gordon** said. “...as they work to reduce overcrowding, improve housing conditions, increase homeownership levels and work with their tribal members in reaching their self-determined goals of providing quality affordable housing for Native people in Indian communities and Alaska Native villages.”

NAIHC’s news conference is being held as **NAIHC** members come to the nation’s capital for the 12th Annual Legislative Conference, held Feb. 28-March 2, which also included addresses by **Rep. Rick Renzi** of Arizona and **Sen. Patty Murray** of Washington. The conference offers **NAIHC** members the opportunity to meet with their Congressional representatives.

NAIHC assists tribes and tribal housing entities in reaching their self-determined goals of providing culturally relevant, decent, safe, sanitary, and quality affordable housing for Native people in Indian communities and Alaska Native villages. NAIHC...A Tradition of Native American Housing: www.naihc.net