

News Release

National American Indian Housing Council

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Senate Indian Affairs Committee States Support for Indian Housing, NAIHC Programs; NAIHC Seeks Stronger Language on Funding Levels

Washington DC – March 9, 2006 – The gradual erosion of funding for the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act (NAHASDA) block grant program over the past several years will cause lasting damage to Indian housing, according to a letter to the Senate Budget Committee from the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs (SCIA). The block grant program decreased by **\$32 million** from FY04 to FY06, and this year proposes a level of **\$625.7 million** which “because of inflationary pressures, the FY07 requested level will result in fewer homes being built for an Indian population that is growing and in need of safe, decent and affordable housing,” according to SCIA.

To meet the current housing and infrastructure demands, **NAIHC** estimates that at least **\$1.1 billion per year** in funding is needed for the **Native American Housing Block Grant (NAHBG)**. A reasonable start for FY07 would be **\$748 million**. The Budget Request proposes **\$625.7 million**, a one-year funding gap of **\$122 million**. In addition, unlike the FY06 Budget Request, the FY07 Request proposes to preserve the **Indian Community Development Block Grant (ICDBG)** in the larger Community Development Fund and seeks to fund it with **\$57.4 million**. **NAIHC** believes that ICDBG should be funded at least at the inflationary adjusted level of **\$77 million**.

NAIHC Funding Should be Restored at Full Level

The **National American Indian Housing Council (NAIHC)** is “by far the major provider of technical assistance and training to the Native community,” SCIA said. The Committee rejects the zeroing out of **NAIHC**’s funding in the President’s FY07 budget. However, SCIA does not make it clear whether it supports a full restoration of **NAIHC**’s funds to the pre-FY06 level of **\$4.6 million** or maintaining funding at the current reduced level of **\$2 million** in FY06. This ambiguity could impact the Budget Committee’s decision in this matter, say **NAIHC** leaders.

After **NAIHC**’s programs were zeroed out in the FY06 budget, Congress restored **\$2 million** to **NAIHC**’s vital programs. However, this was a decrease of **\$2.5 million** from FY05 funding levels.

“**NAIHC** appreciates SCIA’s recognition of our programs as a key provider of effective tools in training and technical assistance for tribal housing authorities,” said **NAIHC Executive Director Gary Gordon**. “However, SCIA states that they support continued funding at the current levels. We fear that without SCIA explicitly stating support for full reinstatement of the **\$4.6 million** funding level, the Budget Committee could cut our funds once again, sharply curtailing the valuable programs that **NAIHC** provides to Indian Country.”

Formula Allocation Not Addressed

In addition to the funding levels, **NAIHC** is concerned that language changing the housing funding allocation formula was not addressed by SCIA. The language, which passed in the final FY06 appropriations and remains in the President’s FY07 Budget Request, is an effort to correct HUD’s unilateral change of the census data used in the NAHBG in 2003; however, because changes to the funding formula necessarily implicate the statutory language of the NAHASDA and therefore SCIA’s jurisdiction, **NAIHC** has consistently taken the position that the matter is properly one for the authorizing committees of Congress, tribes and HUD.

“The language was included, without tribal consultation and over the strong objection of **NAIHC**, in the final FY06 appropriations,” **Gordon** said. “HUD was wrong in its unilateral decision to change the formula without tribal consultation, but so were the advocates who pushed for the change implemented in the FY06 appropriations and sustained in the President’s FY07 Budget Request for the same reason. Two wrongs do not make a Right.”

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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.

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