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NEW FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY LAND TRUSTS

Rep. Bernard Sanders, I-VT

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As you know, I sit on the Housing Subcommittee of the House Banking Committee. With two million Americans homeless, with the construction of new housing lagging far behind the need and demand for housing, it is essential that we as a nation address the need for adequate and affordable housing.

I have tried, in Congress, to bring the lessons we learned in Burlington, and throughout Vermont, to the nation as a whole. As many of you remember, when I was Mayor of Burlington my administration helped establish the first municipally-funded community land trust in the nation. As you know, since that time the Burlington Community Land Trust has thrived, and it is this year celebrating its tenth anniversary. The Burlington Community Land Trust has provided over one hundred units of affordable housing to Vermont residents; equally important, through the land trust housing concept these units will remain perpetually affordable.

I am happy to announce that on Friday the House passed the Housing bill, and that omnibus legislation included five amendments I introduced. One amendment continues the work we have done, here in Vermont, to establish and expand the community land trust movement. This amendment provides that FHA housing guarantees be extended to community land trusts. The second builds on another path-breaking success we had in Burlington, in increasing the hiring of women in the construction trades by six-fold. This amendment requires HUD construction contractors to make good faith efforts to meet a goal of ten percent women in the construction trades. Another amendment makes federal monies available to residents of mobile home parks who want to join together to take over their mobile home parks. This amendment, I believe, will go a long way toward resolving the difficulties many Vermonters have had with landlords who are unwilling to maintain water, sewage, and safety standards. A fourth amendment denies landowners federal rental assistance if they do not make a good faith effort to meet local water, health, and safety standards.

Let me also announce that we have been successful in guaranteeing that all states will receive a minimum of \$2 million for housing for the homeless under the McKinney Block grant program. This is **two and a half** times what the legislation would have guaranteed Vermont before my amendment to raise the minimum was accepted.

Furthermore, today I am pleased to announce, as a result of legislation I introduced earlier, that \$25 million dollars will now be available for technical assistance to community land trusts. I am delighted that, working together with my staff, HUD has established the procedures which will provide access to this significant amount of money for land trusts which want to establish themselves, increase the range of services they offer, or extend the geographical regions they serve. Combined with the future effects of our amendment to open up billions of dollars in mortgage money to land trust homeowners through the FHA, this will greatly strengthen the land trust movement to provide perpetually affordable homes for generations of Americans.

When I went to Congress, one of my concerns was to use the best Vermont has to offer as a model for what the rest of the nation can accomplish. That is why I have consistently worked to encourage the community land trust concept, which has been so successful in Vermont, throughout the rest of the nation. Working together with housing activists throughout Vermont, including the people here with me today, we have developed legislation which will greatly strengthen the land trust movement, and make tens -- or even hundreds-- of thousands of housing units available to low and moderate income families. And it will guarantee those units remain perpetually affordable.

I believe the future availability of mortgage financing through the FHA, coupled with FmHA financing for land trust homes which we secured two years ago, will put the firmest of foundations under the land trust movement, and that we will continue to see it flourish -- and on a greatly expanded level -- as a primary source of perpetually affordable housing.

And now let me introduce: