

Statement of Ranking Member Spencer Bachus, Full Markup

Full Committee Markup

Wednesday, May 23, 2007

Thank you Mr. Chairman, for convening today's markup. Because the Committee has a lot of business to get through today, I will keep my remarks brief.

Two of the housing bills that the Committee will consider today reflect significant contributions by Republican Members of the Committee, including Mrs. Biggert, our Ranking Member on the Housing Subcommittee, Mr. Shays, Mr. Miller, and Mr. Feeney. Chairman Frank and the Chairwoman of the Housing Subcommittee, Ms. Waters, should be commended for working in a spirit of bipartisanship to incorporate the input of Members from this side of the aisle.

H.R. 1851, the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007, which was introduced by Chairwoman Waters with Mrs. Biggert and Mr. Shays as original cosponsors, has the worthy objective of improving the Housing Choice Voucher Program, also called the Section 8 program. Section 8 has become overly complex and burdensome to administer, making it more difficult to serve families that need help, and discouraging work and self-sufficiency.

Over the years, the cost of the housing choice voucher has continued to increase. In 1998, the Housing Certificate Fund consumed 42 percent of HUD's annual budget; by 2005, it consumed 62 percent. Over the past several years, Congress has grappled with issues regarding the overall cost of the program, underused vouchers, the allocation of vouchers for Public Housing Authorities (PHAs), and the general management of the program.

While widespread agreement exists on the need for Section 8 reform, reaching consensus on specific solutions has proved difficult in the past. H.R. 1851 as introduced does not fundamentally change the Section 8 program, but it does include several important modifications to the existing program, including how income is calculated for purposes of determining eligibility for vouchers, how inspections are conducted, and how portability is treated. In addition, the manager's amendment expands the Moving to Work Program, which Republicans strongly support. As this legislation moves forward, I hope we can continue to work together to make additional changes that will encourage greater cost-effectiveness and efficiency to better serve the housing needs of low-income families and individuals.

The Committee will also consider H.R. 2139, the FHA Manufactured Housing Loan Modernization Act of 2007, introduced by Congressmen Feeney, Donnelly, Tiberi and Chairman Frank. This bill is identical to legislation which passed the House last year by a vote of 412 to 6.

H.R. 2139 includes several important reforms to the Title I manufactured housing program, to encourage more private sector participation and increase the availability of FHA loans for manufactured housing. The manufactured housing industry has evolved in the last decade to deliver a higher quality product that saves as much as 25 percent of development costs associated with traditional single-family homes. H.R. 2139 will facilitate greater access to manufactured housing, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

Mr. Chairman, I look forward to the debate today.

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