

## Bachus Prepared Remarks on H.R. 3045, the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act

July 8, 2009

WASHINGTON - Congressman Spencer Bachus, the top Republican on the Financial Services Committee, made the following statement today during the Full Committee mark up of H.R. 3045.

"Thank you, Chairman Frank, for convening today's markup on H.R. 3045, the 'Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2009.'

"Over the years, 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. Core components of the program have faced scrutiny and criticism including income and rent calculation formulas; eligible uses of program funds; tenant eligibility standards; unit quality inspections and the portability of vouchers. In addition, Republicans remain concerned about the rising costs associated with the Section 8 program as more individuals continue to receive assistance for longer periods.

"It was my hope that these issues would be addressed in the Chairman's mark, and it remains my hope that we can address them during the mark-up. Reform of the Section 8 program is critical to ensuring that families in need have access to affordable housing.

"The Section 8 program should offer low-income families a short-term solution to their housing needs. Unfortunately, for too many voucher holders, Section 8 assistance has ceased to be a temporary pit stop on the path to self sufficiency. As a result of lower voucher turnover, Section 8 spending has increased and HUD's budget has ballooned over the past ten years, further contributing to an unsustainable deficit. Indeed, over 40 per cent of HUD's total budget is now consumed by the Section 8 program.

"Mr. Chairman, we must address the long-term costs associated with the existing program, as well as the proposed new spending included in H.R. 3045. For example, the bill under consideration today authorizes 150,000 new incremental vouchers for FY 2010 rather than the 20,000 a year over five years that was negotiated on a bipartisan basis and included in the bill that passed the House in the 110th Congress. The result is over \$1 billion in new deficit spending per year.

"Another troubling aspect of H.R. 3045 is Section 14, which would relax assisted housing eligibility standards for persons that have engaged in criminal activities. Given the long Section 8 waiting lists, it is inappropriate to open Section 8 housing to persons who may pose a risk to other residents, when deserving law-abiding families have been waiting for assistance for years. Furthermore, language in the bill sets up vague and unworkable standards and removes the tools available to owners and managers to ensure the safety of these communities.

"H.R. 3045 does contain several important modifications to the existing Section 8 program, including how income is calculated for purposes of determining eligibility for vouchers, how inspections are conducted, and how portability is treated. However, the bill before us today will take us down a path of higher government spending with little accountability at a time when we can least afford it.

"Mr. Chairman, I know some of my Republican colleagues have amendments that will address some of the bill's shortcomings. Through the debate today and as the bill moves to the floor, 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."

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