



OUR HOMES,
OUR VOICES

MEDIA TOOLKIT
#OURHOMESOURVOICES

**NATIONAL HOUSING
WEEK OF ACTION**

MAY 30-JUNE 5, 2019

WWW.OURHOMES-OURVOICES.ORG

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MEDIA TOOLKIT

#OURHOMESOURVOICES NATIONAL HOUSING WEEK OF ACTION

MAY 30 – JUNE 5, 2019



ABOUT THE NATIONAL HOUSING WEEK OF ACTION

May 30 – June 5, advocates across the nation will hold local events to demand greater federal investments in affordable rental homes. The Campaign for Housing and Community Development Funding and NLIHC have identified this week as “Our Homes, Our Voices National Housing Week of Action” to lift our voices to call attention to the need for increased investments for affordable homes by making the affordable rental housing shortage a national priority.

The Ask: Congress must reject any proposed cuts to housing benefits and instead work to lift the spending caps for non-defense programs. Federal resources are a key solution. We should fully invest in affordable housing resources that help the lowest-income families, like the national Housing Trust Fund, public housing, housing choice vouchers, and many others.



SOCIAL MEDIA & TRADITIONAL MEDIA TIPS

Connect your local campaigns and movement efforts with others throughout the country working to make affordable, safe, and decent homes a top national priority. Use #OurHomesOurVoices on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and other social media platforms to push back against proposed cuts to HUD and USDA housing programs and to expand federal resources for affordable homes. Tag @NLHHC in your posts and repost messages from others.

SHARE, SHARE, SHARE, AND SHARE SOME MORE:

Share photos and videos of you and your team preparing for your event, at your event, and of people in your community using Our Homes, Our Voices gear. Sample images can be downloaded by going to: <https://bit.ly/2Ywnq2v>

Create an event through Facebook, Eventbrite, Cvent or any other event management tool that you can use to spread the word about your event, periodically communicate with people interested in your event and track registrants for post communication.

Share your reasons for participating in the National Housing Week of Action through blogs. Include photos and quotes from others in your community or organization. Share your blog on your website, by email, and on your social media platforms.



SAMPLE POSTS TO TWITTER AND FACEBOOK:

Research shows that reporters and stakeholders use social media as a resource for news. Social media is an important communications tool because it is designed to quickly disseminate information and reach wide audiences. Twitter is a great resource for seeing what reporters and members of Congress are interested in and Facebook is a great tool to rally network support. Don't forget to post updates and share information about your event/activity periodically on social media.

A national tweetstorm has been scheduled for Tuesday, June 4, 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm ET. Use this time to flood Twitter with tweets at members of Congress about how they can support the creation of affordable homes. A list of Twitter handles for U.S. Representatives, is available at: <https://bit.ly/2jXJUGM>. A list of Twitter handles for U.S. Senators, is available at: <https://bit.ly/2BjTOtJ>. Use pictures you've taken throughout the Week of Action, as well as the social media images and infographics available here: <https://www.ourhomes-ourvoices.org/resources>. Please make sure to use **#OurHomesOurVoices** in your tweets.

SAMPLE TWEETS:

- Housing stability is crucial for getting families on path to a better life. HUD's proposed mixed-status rule threatens this path for some low-income immigrants. **#KeepFamiliesTogether**, support housing asst. for people w/ greatest needs **#OurHomesOurVoices**
- Secretary Carson's unconscionable proposal would evict over 100,000 people, including 55,000 deeply poor children that are US citizens or legal residents, at the height of an affordable housing crisis. **#KeepFamiliesTogether** **#OurHomesOurVoices**
- Housing costs are a heavy burden for the lowest-income families. Almost 8M ELI renters use >50% of their monthly income on housing. We must build the political will for a large-scale investment in #affordablehousing that will help those w/ the greatest needs. **#OurHomesOurVoices**
- **#DYK:** Most market-rate apartments remain out of reach for more than 11M extremely low-income households? Investing in deeply income-targeted programs like: **#HTF**, HCV program, **#publichousing** will yield long-term benefits. **#OurHomesOurVoices**
- Let's support bold new initiatives that will protect critical #affordablehousing programs like the **#HTF!** Tell Congress that we advocate on behalf of a sustained commitment to solutions that ensure everyone has access to an affordable home! **#OurHomesOurVoices**
- America is stronger and prosperous when we have safe, decent, accessible, and affordable homes & stable communities. **#OurHomesOurVoices** **#HousingIsInfrastructure**

- In the richest country on earth, we should not have millions who struggle to keep a roof over their head. **#OurHomesOurVoices #HousingIsInfrastructure**
- Housing is a right, not a privilege. Everyone deserves a place to call home and a roof over their head. **#OurHomesOurVoices #HousingIsInfrastructure**
- What if EVERYONE had an affordable roof over their head? I'm joining **#OurHomesOurVoices** to help make this a reality. **#HousingIsInfrastructure**
- Having to decide between paying rent & buying food is unacceptable. I'm pledging to help right this wrong. **#OurHomesOurVoices #HousingIsInfrastructure**
- Affordable homes are critical to climbing the economic ladder. We must invest in **#affordablehomes** to increase opportunity. **#OurHomesOurVoices #HousingIsInfrastructure**
- When the rent eats first, kids lose out. We must stand up for **#OurHomesOurVoices** to help kids reach their full potential. **#HousingIsInfrastructure**
- Stable, affordable homes improve all areas of life for low-income families, seniors, & people with disabilities. **#OurHomesOurVoices #HousingIsInfrastructure**
- No one should have to skimp on food and healthcare just to make rent. We are healthier when we have an affordable home. **#OurHomesOurVoices #HousingIsInfrastructure**
- Families thrive because of housing & community development investments at HUD and USDA. Now is the time to increase funding. We must build on the 10% boost we won in 2018. **#OurHomesOurVoices #HousingIsInfrastructure**
- Congress should lift the harmful budget caps and further increase funding to expand **#affordablehousing**. In 2018 and 2019, advocates secured a significant increase, but we have more work to do! **#OurHomesOurVoices #HousingIsInfrastructure**
- Like roads and bridges, an investment in affordable housing infrastructure will help low-income families thrive. ANY infrastructure deal must include resources to build affordable housing for families living in poverty. **#HousingIsInfrastructure #OurHomesOurVoices**
- Without access to affordable housing, investments in transportation and infrastructure will fall short of creating vibrant communities. Any infrastructure plan must include funds to build homes affordable to families living in poverty. **#HousingIsInfrastructure #OurHomesOurVoices**
- When families living in poverty have access to affordable housing—especially in areas connected to good schools, well-paying jobs, healthcare, and transportation—they are better able to climb the economic ladder. **#HousingIsInfrastructure #OurHomesOurVoices**

Don't tweet? Share sample messages and images on other social media platforms like Facebook or Instagram, tag your member of Congress and use **#OurHomesOurVoices**.

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA:

Use the time before the Week of Action to track the interest of reporters and follow them on social media. Research their contact information and introduce yourself and your event via email and/or social media.

Regardless of the type of interaction, reporters usually devote about 30 seconds to listen to or read a pitch. Therefore, your initial communication must be pithy, precise, and honest. When you pitch *Our Homes, Our Voices National Housing Week of Action*:

- Immediately connect the reporter with why it's important to tell this story now. Use resources available in Diane Yentel's recent testimony to the House Financial Services Committee on housing as infrastructure: <https://bit.ly/2WiqDIC>, The Gap: <https://reports.nlihc.org/gap>, Out of Reach: <https://reports.nlihc.org/oor>, and the NLIHC website: <https://nlihc.org/> Answer the questions: – Why is this story important right now? – What makes the story or the angle unique? – Why should anyone care?
- Pitch the right person: use tools like [Meltwater](#), [Muck Rack](#), or Google Alerts to track and identify the right reporter for the right beat.
- Share a press release or media advisory: circulate a press release to all media contacts using tools like email, Meltwater, or a wire service around May 28. Connect with a few key reporters that you've fostered relationships with or reporters who have recently covered housing, housing as infrastructure and/or HUD funding and the President's budget.
- The media advisory should provide information specifically on your activity. An example press release and media advisory are included in this toolkit.

GENERAL TIPS FOR SPEAKING WITH THE PRESS:

It is important to foster relationships with appropriate media outlets to increase the opportunity for leading the narrative. This may require tracking coverage of your issue on social media and through media hits. Stay aware of a reporter's beat and track reporters who may be new to the affordable housing beat. Shift your communication accordingly and respect a reporter's preferred method of communication. If you are interested in fostering a relationship with a reporter, share relevant new research with that reporter ahead of a wide release. Media relationships are reciprocal and should generate benefits for both parties. Before initiating any relationship, it will be important to determine your overall goal in reaching out to press and to identify your key messages around ending homelessness and increasing housing affordability. Gather background on your key press contacts to determine if they are the right press contacts for your campaign. Determine if they are currently on the housing beat and if they work for traditional newspapers, online media, television, or radio.

Once you've successfully managed to schedule a phone or in-person interview with a

member of the media, be prepared with talking points, citations, and testimonials. Other tips for an interview are:

- Review your main points before the interview: decide on 2-3 key messages to convey.
- Remember that everything is on the record.
- Steer reporters toward the big picture: this is a systemic problem.
- Learn to pivot.
- Connect local issues to national problems. – Share affordable housing challenges specific to your community, – Share examples of what life is like for extremely low-income renters in your state, or – Use the data to emphasize the importance of state or local housing initiatives and funding.
- Make your points brief and simple and avoid jargon.
- It's ok to say, "I don't know."
- Always end the interview by repeating your key messages or the one key takeaway.



SAMPLE PRESS STATEMENT

For Immediate Release: [Date]

CONTACT: [Point of contact name, email address, phone number]

[City] Advocates Plan [Week of Action, Rally, Press Conference, etc] on [May 30- June 5] to Call for Greater Federal Investments in Affordable Homes and Community Development

[CITY, STATE] – On [date of the event] advocates, elected officials, and concerned citizens in [city] are [the event you are planning] to bring more attention to the affordable housing crisis in the community.

[Organization leading the event] has rallied [number participating in the event] to participate in the *Our Homes, Our Voices* National Housing Week of Action. During the week of May 30-June 5, advocates from across the country are coordinating activities to raise awareness around the need for greater federal investments in affordable homes and community development. Local advocates in [city] have joined this week of action because all people deserve an affordable home, and no one should be forced to give up food and basic healthcare to keep a roof over their heads.

[add a paragraph about the event, whether the public can attend, how people can get involved. Remember to provide a link to your Facebook event page or registration/information platform].

In [city] and across the nation, far too many families – including low-income seniors, people with disabilities, veterans, and families with children – struggle to keep a roof over their heads or are experiencing homelessness. More families are renting their homes than ever before, and our nation’s investments in affordable housing have not kept pace. As a result, rents are increasing everywhere. But, because of underfunding, three out of every four families in need of housing benefits are turned away. [add some information about local housing needs. Click [here](#) for state and local data].

In 2018, advocates and Congressional champions secured a 10% increase to federal investments in affordable housing. But threats remain. President Trump’s budget proposes to slash affordable housing by \$11 billion compared to current levels - a move that could increase homelessness and housing poverty in our community.

[Quote from organization leader. Could be the following] Instead of reducing our nation’s investments in affordable housing, we need to make a bold and sustained commitment to ensure that everyone has a safe, accessible, and affordable home. Because when we invest in affordable homes, we invest in people, our communities, and America as a whole – from increased employment and economic mobility to improved health and better education.

###

[Organization’s boiler plate]

SAMPLE MEDIA ADVISORY

MEDIA ADVISORY

Date: [On or around May 28]

Contact: [Organization's media contact]

[Insert Name] to Hold [Event] on Federal Solutions to the Affordable Housing Crisis

[Insert Name] will [Event name and brief description] on the need to expand federal investments in affordable rental homes. This event is a part of the *Our Homes, Our Voices* National Housing Week of Action.

This [Event] will address how our community can work to expand – not slash – housing benefits because when we invest in affordable homes, we invest in people, in communities, and in America as a whole.

When:

Where:

Speakers:

Why: Too many low-income seniors, people with disabilities, families with children, and individuals are struggling to pay rent and make ends meet. Rising rents mean that these families are forced to make impossible choices between keeping a roof over their heads and paying for groceries, medications, or saving for a rainy day.

Research shows that when people have safe, decent, and accessible homes that they can afford, they are better able to find and maintain employment, achieve economic mobility, and stay in good health. We are joining with the *Our Homes, Our Voices* campaign to ensure that Congress knows that we support bold and sustained commitments to ensure that everyone can keep a roof over their heads.

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SAMPLE OP-ED (395 WORDS*)

**Depending on the outlet, the word limit for op-eds are usually between 700 – 850*

As the [title] of [your organization], I was thrilled to see Congress provide a 10% increase in FY19 funding for programs that address the affordable housing crisis that has prevented families from achieving greater economic stability in our community.

In [city] and across the nation, far too many families – including low income seniors, people with disabilities, veterans, and families with children – struggle to keep a roof over their heads or are experiencing homelessness. More families are renting their homes than ever before, and our nation’s investments in affordable housing have not kept pace. As a result, rents are increasing everywhere. [add some information about local housing needs. Click [here](#) for state and local data].

Despite the growing needs, three out of every four families in need of housing assistance are turned away due to a lack of funding. Because “the rent eats first,” as sociologist and author of *Evicted* Matthew Desmond says, these families are forced to make harmful tradeoffs and skimp on groceries, medical care, and other basic needs. Every state and congressional district is directly impacted.

Threats to affordable housing investments remain, despite the significant increase in funding advocates secured last year. President Trump’s budget proposes to slash investments in affordable housing by \$11 billion from current levels - a move that could increase homelessness and housing poverty in our community. This is the wrong approach.

We need to continue to make a bold and sustained commitment to ensure that everyone has a safe, accessible and affordable home. Because when we invest in affordable homes, we invest in people, our communities, and America as a whole – from increased employment and economic mobility to improved health and better education.

[Provide a local example of how affordable housing investments improve the lives of residents. You can also focus on specific programs that you support].

Advocates, elected officials, and concerned citizens are joining together to participate in the Our Homes, Our Voices National Housing Week of Action from May 30 – June 5 to bring more attention to the affordable housing crisis. In our community, we are planning [Event & Date]. We firmly believe that all people deserve an affordable home, and no one should be forced to give up food and basic healthcare to keep a roof over their heads.

Lawmakers should not only reject President Trump’s call to slash housing benefits, but they must continue to expand them.

CALL-IN DAY SCRIPT

A national call-in day has been scheduled for Wednesday, June 5. Use this time to flood member of Congress' offices with calls about how they can support the creation of affordable homes.

A sample call-in day script is available at: <https://bit.ly/2vEh0Cc>

SAMPLE SCRIPT:

1. First, identify yourself as a constituent and ask to speak to the legislator or staffer who deals with housing. Thank them for speaking with you and tell the staffer where you are from. If your job permits it, mention what you do and how it relates to affordable housing.
 - i. Example: "Hi. Thanks so much for talking with me today. My name is Vicki Brown and I am from Little Rock, Arkansas. I work for an affordable housing coalition in the state, and our mission is to ensure that everyone in the state has access to safe, decent and affordable housing."
 2. Then state: "A safe, decent, accessible, and affordable home is the building block to all other areas of life, but there is a shortage of affordable rental housing in your district (the legislator's district) and in every community around the country." (For housing data, see <https://nlihc.org/housing-needs-by-state>). "This shortage slows economic growth, drives up healthcare costs, and traps families and communities in poverty."
 3. "The shortage of affordable homes is the direct result of underfunded federal housing programs. Additional federal resources are needed to fully address the need and restore funding to previous levels."
 4. "Please reject (or ask the legislator to reject) any proposed cuts to housing benefits and harmful shutdowns, and instead work with your colleagues (have the legislator work with their colleagues) to lift the spending caps and increase investment in HUD and USDA Rural Development programs to ensure everyone has a safe, accessible, and affordable home."
 5. "Do you support (does the legislator support) lifting the spending caps and full funding for HUD and USDA housing programs?"
- "Thank you for your time and your service. Would you like me to send any follow-up information?"



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c/o National Low Income Housing Coalition

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