



Policy Update

Spencer Bell | Policy Analyst, NCHV

The federal machinations continue to churn as infrastructure talks have taken up much of the oxygen on Capitol Hill over the past few months. **H.R. 3684, the “Investing in a New Vision for the Environment and Surface Transportation in America Act,”** or the **INVEST in America Act**, is a \$1 trillion piece of legislation that has \$550 billion in new spending.

Currently, the bill looks to be favorable for passage soon, which means after August recess, Congress will turn to address other issues such as the eventual administrative and congressional priority reconciliation bill, yearly funding bills, and end of the year Committee minibusses.

After the passage of the CARES Act in 2020, Congress passed the American Rescue Plan Act (ARP), infusing the sector with \$50 billion in housing and homelessness resources, which had \$27 billion for rental assistance.

If we add this to the \$25 billion in funds for Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) from last year and the \$5 billion for utilities in the ARP, over \$50 billion of rent and utility arrears accrued during the pandemic can be offset. States and localities have instituted hundreds of programs after the first round of ERA, or ERA-1 was instituted, and are actively setting up ways to get that and this new ERA-2 money out the door.

The ARP also had \$5 billion in new funding for states and cities to provide housing stability for tens of thousands of people experiencing homelessness and provided VA with **\$14.5 billion**, of which **\$486.5 million** has been awarded to the **Homeless Programs Office (HPO)**.

With the passage of the American Rescue Plan Act, the December COVID-19 relief bill, and the CARES Act, advocates, and congressional champions have secured \$85 billion in supplemental emergency housing and homelessness assistance since the start of the pandemic. The largest issue is getting the money into the hands of individuals that need it, with less than 10% of the ERA funds having been distributed as of the end of July but the rate has been increasing in August.



Regarding FY'22 appropriations, NCHV has been able to further advocate for program increases, with the U.S. House of Representatives currently proposing a \$246 million increase, equal with the President's Budget Request.

For a quick breakdown, the current U.S. Senate totals as of 8/4 by program; Supportive Service for Veteran Families (SSVF) is at \$395 million, Grant and Per Diem (GPD) is at \$270 million, HUD-VASH is at \$484 million, and Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) is at \$70 million, and these totals are rounded to the closest million. The committee report does indicate for advance appropriations that SSVF will return to \$420 million in 2023 but does not extend that return to GPD. The Department of Labor's Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program is increased in the House's appropriations to \$68 million in FY'22. We are still awaiting numbers from the Senate on the Department of Labor and Department of Housing and Urban Development programs.

The U.S. House Appropriators are requesting \$20 million in additional HUD-VASH Vouchers, a reduction from the prior fiscal year. This level of funding shortchanges both the VA Secretary's stated need in testimony and the President's stated intentions of increasing the number of vouchers for this population specifically. NCHV will continue to push for sufficient program funding to properly administer homeless programs that these veterans have earned.

The largest issue is getting the money into the hands of individuals that need it, with less than 10% of the ERA funds having been distributed as of the end of July but the rate has been increasing in August.

Substantial legislation has been offered in the form of S.2172, the "Building Solutions for Veterans Experiencing Homelessness Act of 2021." This is Chair of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Senator Jon Tester's bill, which contains several NCHV priorities.

Those items include increasing GPD to 200% per diem, augmenting Technical Assistance for providers, waiving recapture and matching requirements for VA Capital Grantees, making HVRP (Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program) permanent, making health navigators permanent, and piloting a host of other provisions like addressing the needs of elderly veterans, veterans looking for substance use treatment and accessing those struggling with transportation needs.

S. 2172 passed a procedural hurdle recently and was voted out of committee unanimously for consideration before the full Senate. This was in part due to the efforts of NCHV, its members, and our partners in providing real-time support for the bill as it proceeded through committee markup. We offer a resounding thank you to everyone who participated.

NCHV will continue to push for co-sponsorships while getting the bill in front of the full Senate as well as introduced in the House throughout the session.

The CDC's eviction moratorium lifted on August 1st and with spiking levels of the COVID Delta Variant around the nation, the inevitable evictions began in earnest. The administration claimed it was legally constrained by the Supreme Court that is threatening to overturn any further federal moratoria, so they deferred to Congress, states, and localities to continue or begin imposing their own eviction and foreclosure moratoria.



After weeks of a media barrage and a failed last-minute congressional attempt to do just that and pass emergency legislation halting the evictions, both the eviction and foreclosure moratoria had expired.

Yet within just two days, on August 3rd, with the nation's media and advocates shining an intense spotlight and Congressional Representatives protesting by continued legislative maneuvering and even sleeping on the steps of the capitol building, the CDC (Centers for Disease Control) reversed itself and issued a more targeted **temporary eviction moratorium** to stop the spread of COVID-19, effective **8/3/21 through 10/3/21**.

Now, this **applies to evictions initiated but not completed and new applications, this does not address foreclosures**. Specifically, it pertains to counties experiencing substantial and high levels of COVID-19 community spread, which according to the administration will cover 90% of renters at risk of eviction.

The order may apply to counties not currently covered if they meet the standard later, and when a county does not meet the standard for 14 consecutive days, the order no longer applies. It also does not apply where a state, local, or tribal moratorium with greater protections is in place, does not remove the obligation to pay rent, mortgage, or prohibit charging interest, fees, or penalties, and does not prevent evictions for other contract/lease violations. The Supreme Court may decide to weigh in at any point too.

We ask that you keep NCHV apprised of the changing landscape as stakeholders and service providers and let us know what you are seeing on the ground. **NCHV conducts monthly government relations committee (GRC) calls**. If policy and legislation are of interest you and would like to join the GRC, please contact us. Also, if you have questions in general you can reach out to the policy department anytime at sbellenchv.org or by dialing **202-546-1969**.



Sponsored by The Home Depot Foundation



During this week NCHV will be exploring Tiny Homes as an affordable housing option for veterans. We will share our research, which includes the background and potential uses for Tiny Homes, the pros and cons, the standard for what we would like to see in these communities, examples from established communities and other considerations for any one thinking about using this housing intervention.

With this offering, it is not our intention to recommend this housing option over others. This week is simply a week of exploration into an innovative method of providing housing for those who need it.

[**Click here to watch a preview**](#) and make sure to check your emails and NCHV social media for more information.

