

QUOTES FROM THOSE WHO OPPOSE THE VOTING RIGHTS RESTRICTIONS ADDED TO H.R. 1461

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops:

Proposals that would limit eligible recipients to organizations that have as their primary purpose the provision of affordable housing would effectively prevent Catholic dioceses, parishes and Catholic Charities agencies from participating in Affordable Housing Fund programs. Similarly, proposals that would prohibit recipients from engaging in voter registration and lobbying activities with their own funds during the period they are utilizing affordable housing funds would force Catholic agencies to choose between participating in Affordable Housing Fund programs or engaging in constitutionally protected voter registration and lobbying activities with their own funds.

Letter to Speaker Hastert, October 3, 2005

The Episcopal Church:

The very people in need of affordable housing are those who often need the most help in fully participating in our democracy as voters. It is highly ironic that at the very moment when we have seen in the starkest of terms the great need for affordable housing, important legislation to meet that need is encumbered with language that undermines our democracy.

Letter to Speaker Hastert, October 20, 2005

Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America:

Proposals that would limit eligible recipients to organizations that have as their “primary purpose” the provision of affordable housing would effectively prevent many Jewish community entities from participating in the Affordable Housing Fund programs. Similarly, proposals that would prohibit recipients from engaging in voter registration and lobbying activities with their own funds in order to receive affordable housing funds would force many Jewish agencies to choose between participating in Affordable Housing Fund programs or engaging in constitutionally protected voter registration and lobbying activities with their own funds.

Letter to Hon. Nancy Pelosi, October 24, 2005

Catholic Charities, USA

Catholic Charities, USA supports the Affordable Housing Fund as part of the *Federal Housing Finance Reform Act of 2005* (H.R. 1461). Every American deserves a decent home, and CCUSA encourages federal affordable housing programs to assist our neediest families. However, on behalf of our member agencies, CCUSA urges opposition to amendments that would limit or prevent our agencies from participating in the Affordable Housing Fund program.

NAACP:

Specifically, within the manager's amendment is an ill-advised and extremely divisive provision that would disqualify any non-profit organization from participating in this fund if the groups have engaged in non-partisan voter registration, get-out-the-vote, or other, non-partisan activities in the past 12 months. Under this ill-conceived idea, non-profit organizations would not be able to use their own funds to conduct non-partisan voter education and registration activities if they participated in the Affordable Housing Fund, which is created by this legislation

Given that half of all African Americans live in unaffordable, inadequate and/or crowded housing areas, this proposal sends the wrong message to them and, quite frankly, to all Americans. By providing low-income and extremely low-income Americans with the tools to become active, educated and enfranchised members of our society, we would be helping to improve our communities and our nation as a whole.

Letter to Members of Congress from Hilary O. Shelton, Director, October 26, 2005

National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials, National Council of La Raza, National Puerto Rican Coalition, Inc, and the League of United Latin American Citizens:

Unfortunately, after passage, [of the committee bill on a vote of 65-5, with the affordable housing provision passing on a vote of 53-17] a compromise was struck between the House Leadership and the Financial Services Committee that would preclude most nonprofits from accessing the funds. Many of the organizations that would be left out are uniquely positioned to develop the affordable housing needed in their communities. Specifically, nonprofit applicants would be restricted from participating in voter registration and many classic civic engagement activities in the twelve months before the time of application.

Letter to Speaker Hastert, October 24, 2005 (information added)

National Organizations Opposed to Voter Restrictions in H.R. 1461, which includes the Episcopal Church, Lutheran Services of America, United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries, U.S. Jesuit Conference, American Jewish Congress, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) Washington Office and nearly 700 national and state groups.

We believe that the restrictions on the use of funds in H.R. 1461, both in the bill as reported by the Committee on Financial Services as well as under current law, provide sufficient safeguards to prevent the funds from being used for voter participation or advocacy purposes. These safeguards include a prohibition on lobbying with federal funds and, for 501(c)(3) organizations, a ban on partisan electoral activities. We support these restrictions, as we agree that money under the Affordable Housing Fund should be used exclusively for providing low-income housing to those who need it—and not to encourage voter turnout or for any other use.

Letter to Members of Congress, October 26, 2005

