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## Greening Affordable Housing

NLIHC supports green technology, retrofits, and standards that improve and help preserve public and assisted housing, result in healthy living conditions for tenants, and provide cost savings for the lowest income households.

Numerous energy efficiency and green retrofit bills that would have affected public and assisted housing were introduced in the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress. Among them, the GREEN Act, and its Senate companion bill, the Energy Efficiency in Housing Act, proposed incentives to increase energy efficiency of HUD and USDA housing. The Green Affordable Housing Act, proposed providing grants and loans for owners of HUD assisted properties to make green retrofits to projects in exchange for extending the property's terms of affordability. The Energy Efficiency Modernization Act, proposed providing incentives for owners of federally assisted housing to increase a property's energy efficiency by sharing cost savings between HUD and owners. In the Senate, the REAL Act, proposed providing loans through HUD for renewable energy systems.

There was considerable federal activity around climate change in 2009. The House passed H.R. 2454, the American Clean Energy and Security Act, and the Senate introduced the Clean Energy Jobs and American Power Act, both of which contained a set-aside for investments in public and assisted housing. Neither of the bills gained support and are currently being re-crafted for the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress.

For fiscal year 2011, HUD coordinated with DOE to implement green retrofitting into its high priority performance goals by setting a goal of weatherizing 126,000 HUD assisted units.

In the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress, NLIHC urges congress to pass energy efficiency legislation that would benefit tenants through utility cost savings, health improvements and preservation of federally assisted housing. NLIHC also supports developing comprehensive climate policy that would provide funding to improve the housing conditions of extremely low income households.

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NLIHC believes that environmentally sound building practices benefit affordable housing tenants and that, conversely, investing in affordable housing is sound environmental policy. Residential buildings produce nearly a fifth of green house gas emissions and HUD and USDA's affordable properties may be responsible for higher residential emissions as those properties tend to be older and less energy efficient. HUD currently estimates that it spends nearly \$5 billion a year on energy costs for its Section 8 and public housing stock alone and gains in efficiency will be realized directly as budget savings. Energy efficiency investments can reduce costs for tenants and owners and can also help preserve buildings, improve tenant health, and increase safety and reliability of heating and other systems.

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For any greening policies or practices affecting affordable housing, NLIHC believes that:

- 1) **Tenants should not bear the cost of improvements.** Federal policy or funds used to achieve energy efficiencies or other green housing goals should not result in rent or utility increases for tenants.
- 2) **Tenants should share in savings generated.** Any cost benefits achieved through energy efficiencies or other methods should be realized not only by owners but also by tenants. This equitable division of savings will engage both owners and tenants in green practices.
- 3) **Tenant health should be positively impacted by changes to policy or practice.** Any greening policies or practices that are implemented should, where ever possible, be optimized to improve conditions that impact tenant health.