

Stand Up for Rural America - Rural Community Developers Network Reporter

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STAND UP CAMPAIGN UPDATE

At the Steering Committee's behest, we worked hard to mobilize public comments on two federal regulators' proposed changes to CRA. One of the proposals would have watered down CRA by broadening the list of eligible activities and the "rural" geography. The numbers of public comments broke records. Ultimately, three regulators decided to issue new and uniform regulations for intermediate small banks which include a "community development" test and provide CRA credit for eligible activities in economically distressed as well as middle income underserved nonmetropolitan areas. "Economic distress" is measured by income, poverty, unemployment and population loss. "Underserved" communities are those which may have difficulty meeting essential needs due to population size, density and/or dispersion.

POLICY UPDATE

The Four Bank Regulators have sent a message to financial institutions, encouraging them to help hurricane victim customers with their financial needs, including giving borrowers additional time to pay. The Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, the National Credit Union Administration, the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency and the Office of Thrift Supervision, and the Conference of State Bank Supervisors issued a joint press release encouraging lenders to work with both individual and commercial borrowers affected by the storms. View the release at www.ffiec.gov/katrina.htm.

The Senate has passed a one-year extension of the New Markets Tax Credit legislation. This means the program will be extended through 2008 with \$3.5 billion in available allocations if the House decides to include the extension in its Tax Reconciliation Bill and any issues are successfully resolved in conference between the two houses. The House is expected to take it up when it returns Dec. 5. Conference negotiations could begin when the Senate returns Dec. 12. Stay tuned.

The House of Representatives has approved legislation that would strengthen regulation of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. The bill includes an Affordable Housing Program to fund the production and preservation of very low-income housing, but nonprofit sponsors would be eligible only if they (and their affiliates) do not engage in voter registration activities. Senate legislation is at an impasse and the White House opposes the House bill, so prospects for moving forward are unclear at this time.

FUNDING AND FINANCING OPPORTUNITIES

USDA has \$17 million for Technical Assistance and Training Grants to improve water systems in rural areas. For more information, contact Stephen Saulnier, 202-690-2526. **The deadline is Dec. 31.**

The Pew Partnership for Civic Change is now accepting nominations for the Civic Change Award, given to an individual, organization, or community that has demonstrated a commitment to improving civic life. The deadline is Dec. 31. For more information, visit <http://www.pew-partnership.org>.

USDA has more than \$3 million available for the Tribal Colleges Extension Service Program. The grants are available to conduct non-formal education and outreach activities to help meet the needs of Native American people and to provide essential services to their communities. **The deadline is Jan. 13.** Contact 202-401-5048 for more information.

The Taproot Foundation has announced a new Annual Report Service Grant, providing nonprofit organizations with the processes and tools to produce an annual report each year, as well as an initial version for the first year. **The application deadlines are Dec. 1, March 1, and June 1.** For more information, call 415-359-1423 or visit www.taprootfoundation.org/grants/annualreport.shtml.

CharityAdvantage is now accepting proposals for NP Online Action, a \$4.2 million technology product and service program to improve technology and web-related activities for nonprofits. The application deadline is open. For more information, go to www.charityadvantage.com.

TRAINING EVENTS AND CONFERENCES

The New Partners for Smart Growth Conference will be Jan. 26-28 in Denver. The program will feature smart growth strategies, the latest research, implementation tools, successful case studies, interactive learning experiences, and new policies. More information is available at www.outreach.psu.edu/programs/smartgrowth/about.html.

Affordable Housing and Child Care: The Nuts and Bolts of Successful Development is a training institute, consisting of four sequential 2-day modules, to be held in Northern California in February; New York City in March; and in Southern California in April. The institute is designed specifically for housing developers considering child care operators as development partners and tenants in their developments. Visit <http://www.liifund.org/> for more information or call (415) 772-9094.

The USDA's Agricultural Outlook Forum will be held February 16-17 in Arlington, Virginia. The theme, "Prospering in Rural America," will highlight the economic development of rural America. Sessions will include, Shifting Trade Patterns, Chinese Agriculture, Homeland Security, the African Growth & Opportunity Act, Bio-fuel Production and New Energy Forms in Rural Areas, Community Supported Agriculture, and Feedback from the 2007 Farm Bill Listening Sessions. Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns and other officials will be among the speakers. Visit www.usda.gov/oce/forum or call 877-572-6043.

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INFORMATION AND OTHER RESOURCES

Building Wealth in Rural Communities: The New Homestead Act and Individual Homestead Accounts.

This report examines the potential for the Act and IHAs to build wealth through the creations of jobs, development of small businesses, home ownership and rehabilitation and increased retirement savings. Go to www.cfra.org/bw_new_homestead_act_report.htm.

"Regional Asset Indicators: The Wealth of Regions" is a report in the September issue of The Main Street Economist

from the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City. The report takes a closer look at three components of wealth--residential real estate, and financial and rental real estate investments. Go to www.kansascityfed.org/RuralCenter/mainstreet/MainStMain.htm to download the report.

The North Carolina Manpower Development Corporation (MDC) and Duke University have completed a study of Rural Poverty.

Early findings indicate poverty is not static. Families regularly move into and out of poverty. When the study findings are confirmed, MDC will host community

meetings to craft a community-base response and enhance programs and services for the poor. Visit www.mdcinc.org for more information or call (919) 968-4531.

"Research & Resources for Rebuilding" is a list of publications and other resources the Department of Housing and Urban Development's

Office of Policy Development and Research (PD&R) is offering to state and local officials, builders/developers, and others involved in Gulf Coast hurricane recovery efforts. This is a one-stop-shop for research reports, publications, and information, including existing city ordinances and state laws about the use of manufactured and modular housing, rehabilitation, storm-resistant building design, and disaster response. To view the list, visit

www.huduser.org/publications/destech/hurricanes05.html.

Neighborhood Residence and the Problems of School-Age Children

highlights the results of a study of the effects of neighborhood characteristics and social processes on children's development, especially related to mental health. For more information, visit

<http://www rtc.pdx.edu/pgDataTrends.shtml>.

Send information on funding opportunities, events, publications, resources or rural related policy issues to: reporter@ruralamerica.org. Announcements will be published at our discretion based on space and applicability.

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