

Congressman Albio Sires (NJ-13)

Financial Services Committee

“Perspectives on the Livable Communities Act of 2010”

September 23, 2010 at 2:30 p.m.

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

- Thank you Chairman Frank and Ranking Member Bachus for holding this important hearing on my esteemed colleague, Congressman Ed Perlmutter’s legislation, HR 4690, the Livable Communities Act of 2010.
- As a former member of this Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to sit before you today.
- I’d also like to thank Congressman Blumenauer for his testimony. I am a proud co-sponsor of his legislation, HR 5824, the Transportation and Housing Affordability Transparency Act also called THAT Act, and am eager to see his legislation move forward through the legislative process.

LIVABLE COMMUNITIES ACT

- There is a great need for livable communities legislation and I applaud Congressman Perlmutter for introducing the Livable Communities Act and leading efforts here in the House.

- The Livable Communities Act represents an important tool to improve communication and coordination between federal agencies.
- Specifically, this bill will create the *Interagency Council on Sustainable Communities* to bring agencies such as the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Transportation, Environmental Protection Agency, and other agencies to the same table.
- Additionally, the Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities will be established to administer the Department of Housing and Urban Development's sustainability initiatives.
- Lastly, the Livable Communities Act will administer two grant programs, the Challenge Grant Program and the Comprehensive Planning Grant Program, both of which partner with local communities.
- These competitive grants would allow communities to integrate sustainable development projects and incorporate public transportation and affordable housing.

LIVABLE COMMUNITIES AND REVITALIZATION ACT

- I'd also like to take this opportunity to discuss my legislation, HR 3734, the "Urban Revitalization and Livable Communities Act." Some of you may be familiar with this bill since 21 co-sponsors of the 131 total co-sponsors sit on this Committee. I thank you all for your support.
- As a former Mayor, I know first-hand the benefits that parks bring to communities.
- During my 3 terms as Mayor, I revitalized all parks in West New York, New Jersey and saw our community benefit economically, environmentally, and socially.
- As a result, I introduced legislation to create four federal grant programs to urban parks and recreation agencies that must be matched with local funds.
- There are four major grant programs within HR 3734.
- **Rehabilitation grants** would be used for purposes of remodeling or rebuilding recreational areas and facilities.
- **Innovation grants** would be used to cover costs of personnel, facilities and equipment designed to demonstrate innovative and cost-effective recreation opportunities.
- **At-risk youth recreation grants** would be either for new programs or continuing program support for existing programs that provide alternatives to at-risk youth.
- Lastly, there are **recovery action program grants**, which would be used for the development of local park and recreation programs, including citizen involvement and planning.
- Research shows that healthy and vibrant urban areas play key roles in improving the

economy, health, and quality of life in our communities.

- Urban parks and recreation centers are instrumental in helping our nation achieve important national goals of increasing exercise and improving health.
- The statistics speak for themselves - our nation's obesity rate is rising.
- Over the last 25 years, obesity among youth between 12 and 19 has tripled.
- Nearly one-third of Americans live in neighborhoods without sidewalks and less than half of our country's children have a playground within walking distance of their homes.
- My legislation will ultimately create economic benefits through job creation, environmental benefits through the improvement of green spaces, and health benefits by creating opportunities for Americans to become more active.
- In addition to having 131 co-sponsors, I have the support of over 30 diverse organizations, including the National Recreation and Park Association, American Society of Landscape Architects, United States Conference of Mayors, Trust for Public Land, and United States Soccer Foundation.

CONCLUDING STATEMENT

- Both Congressman Perlmutter's bill and my Livable Communities and Revitalization Act share the common thread of using grant programs to stimulate and create healthy and livable communities.
- The Livable Communities Act is a bill that will benefit our local communities and our nation by assisting local efforts to make affordable places to live and work.
- Just last month, the Senate marked up the Livable Communities Act and I am looking forward to Congressman Perlmutter's version moving forward as well.
- I believe that my legislation complements the Livable Communities Act and I look forward to working with this Committee in the future.
- I applaud this Committee's work on this important issue and thank you again for allowing me to testify this afternoon.

