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CONGRESSWOMAN NYDIA M. VELÁZQUEZ

FALL 2008

Fighting to Preserve Affordable Housing in New York City

In the past four years, private firms have purchased 75,000 of New York City's 1.2 million rent-stabilized apartments. As a senior member of the Committee that oversees housing programs, Congresswoman Velázquez directed the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to ensure these buildings remain affordable to renters.

"We can't allow big firms to systematically eliminate our City's affordable housing units," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "While we struggle to

maintain rents that a working family can afford, these schemes could quickly eliminate low-cost options."

An alarming number of tenants in New York City have been forced out of apartments after private companies purchased their buildings. The Congresswoman seeks to prevent the new landlords from removing tenants so they can increase rents -- and profits.

"Housing costs continue to rise above and beyond the reach of so many of our

neighbors. We have to make the preservation of affordable housing a top priority, especially during times of need," Congresswoman Velázquez said.

For her efforts to support affordable housing and preserve the City's valuable public housing properties, the Congresswoman was honored by the Hispanic Society of the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA). She was recognized in October during the group's Annual Scholarship Dinner Dance.

Connecting Brooklyn to the Waterfront

Congresswoman Velázquez secured resources through the Department of Justice to support efforts that teach New York City youth about marine ecology, habitat and the history of the Brooklyn waterfront. The funding benefits Cove Camp and other programs operated by the Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservancy.

"By giving New York City kids the chance to learn about the Harbor, we are teaching them about the importance of preserving the environment and opening their eyes to new educational horizons," Congresswoman Velázquez said.

The Conservancy's educational initiatives target at-risk and underserved kids. These programs allow students to become explorers of the Brooklyn waterfront, and understand how industry helped shape the area and the impact of human construction has affected the ecosystem.

"Brooklyn's waterfront provides its neighbors the opportunity to interact with nature in a beautiful and evolving setting," she said.

To better connect the community to the waterfront, the Brooklyn Bridge Park



Conservancy conducts a number of events and courses, such as seining in the East River, bird watching, a butterfly program and Wee Park Citizens, a hands-on education program for toddlers.

Federal Grants Assist Local Groups

ASIAN AMERICANS FOR EQUALITY: \$50,000 for housing counseling.

NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS: \$ 37,000 for housing counseling.

NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY: \$944,335 to research, display, interpret and collect artifacts relating to the history of the Underground Railroad.

CHILD CENTER FOR NEW YORK: \$250,000 for mental health and substance abuse services.

LUTHERAN MEDICAL CENTER: \$500,000 for patient outreach and chronic disease prevention, and \$244,604 for community based dental partnership program.

LOWER EAST SIDE SERVICE CENTER: \$450,000 for substance abuse and HIV/AIDS treatment services.

SUNSET PARK HEALTH COUNCIL, INC.: \$150,000 for health care center cluster.

To find out more about how your organization can apply for a federal grant, please visit Rep. Velázquez's website: www.house.gov/velazquez/constituents/grants.html.

Helping Workers Keep Their Jobs and Prepare for the Future

Congresswoman Velázquez called on the U.S. Department of Labor to devise a plan for dealing with job losses in New York's financial and manufacturing sectors. In August, unemployment in New York City increased more than it had in any one month in 30 years.

"Stagnant job growth and wages have combined with the dramatic market downturn to produce a dangerous time for New Yorkers and the country as a whole," she said. "The federal government has to do more right now to invest in New York's most valuable resource, the American worker."

The Congresswoman directed the Labor Department to provide \$150 million in federal grants for programs to bolster New York employment. She also called for a full review of existing programs designed to stem the tide of unemployment. Similar efforts implemented under President Clinton helped create 22.7 million new jobs and dropped the unemployment rate by more than 40 percent.

"New York is looking to the U.S. Department of Labor for leadership during these troubled economic times. We have to use every tool available to help calm this storm and protect our City's hard working residents," she said.

Protecting Families and Small Businesses During Economic Crisis

On October 3, the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 was signed into law to provide much-needed relief. At a time when City residents are feeling real effects of the financial downturn, the package included a number of provisions to keep New Yorkers in their homes and assist our state's 1.9 million small business owners.

Congresswoman Velázquez worked to ensure the final legislation will prevent the loss of rental units that many New York City families rely on for affordable housing. There are currently 580 NYC apartment buildings, with 40,000 rental units, at risk of default.

The bill includes a Velázquez-led initiative that guarantees continued tenant protections and safeguards

against the loss of multi-family buildings facing foreclosure.

"This is an important step to keep our City's hard-working families in their homes," she said. "It is essential that we protect the rights of tenants and ensure our nation's affordable housing remains secure during this financial crisis."

The legislation also provides New York's small business owners with much-needed assistance by making more capital available for borrowers, including commercial and consumer loans. This means small firms will be able to meet payroll, finance their inventories and, as the economy recovers, expand their operations.

"Access to credit is critical, and we have taken the first steps needed



Congresswoman Velázquez visits the Brooklyn factory where Olivia Rose Tal Shoes are crafted. The locally owned and operated small business is one of only a few shoe manufacturing companies in the United States.

to reopen the spigot so that capital can flow more freely to small firms," Congresswoman Velázquez said.

Enacting Meaningful Reforms for New York Families

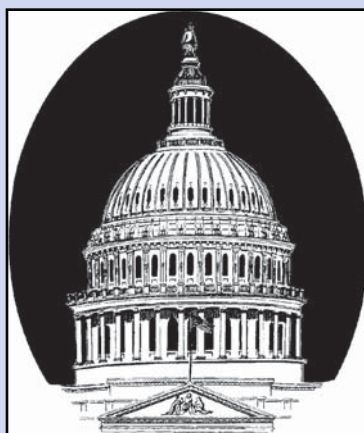
The U.S. House of Representatives built a record of accomplishment throughout the 110th Congress. The Democratic-led House passed a wide range of measures to make America safer, care for our children and families, and protect the American dream.

- **Supporting Hard-Working Americans:** Increased the minimum wage for the first time in 10 years, from \$5.15 an hour to \$7.25 an hour. This will provide a \$4,400 raise for 13 million Americans.

- **Ensuring Success of Small Businesses:** Supported our nation's small firms by helping them reduce costs through the use of energy efficient technology and create innovations that will serve as the basis for our energy future.

- **Protecting the American Dream:** A comprehensive housing package provides mortgage assistance that allows families in danger of losing their homes to refinance into lower-cost, government-insured mortgages, helping at least 400,000 families avoid foreclosure.

- **Pressing for a New Direction Out of Iraq:** Congress passed legislation to prohibit the establishment of permanent bases in Iraq; required benchmarks and progress reports to be submitted. The House also approved legislation providing for the responsible redeployment of troops in Iraq. However, the effort was blocked when the President threatened to veto the bill.



- **Rejuvenating the Economy:** The Economic Recovery and Stimulus package provided Recovery Rebates for 130 million American families to jumpstart the economy and help families with rising costs.

- **Expanding Access to a College Education:** The largest expansion of college financial assistance in six decades cuts interest rates in half on college loans and increases the maximum Pell Grant awards. New GI Bill provides free college education to veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan.

- **Increasing Assistance During Times of Need:** Food Stamps program and Unemployment Benefits were extended to help millions of Americans make ends meet during these tough financial times.

- **Preserving Medicare:** Enhanced Medicare benefits to help 44 million seniors and people with disabilities, assuring continued access to quality healthcare providers.

- **Groundbreaking Energy Legislation:** Raises vehicle fuel efficiency standards (35 mpg by the year 2020) for the first time in 32 years, and creates tax incentives for clean renewable energy that will generate and save more than 500,000 jobs.

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