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Breaking Issues in Affordable Housing

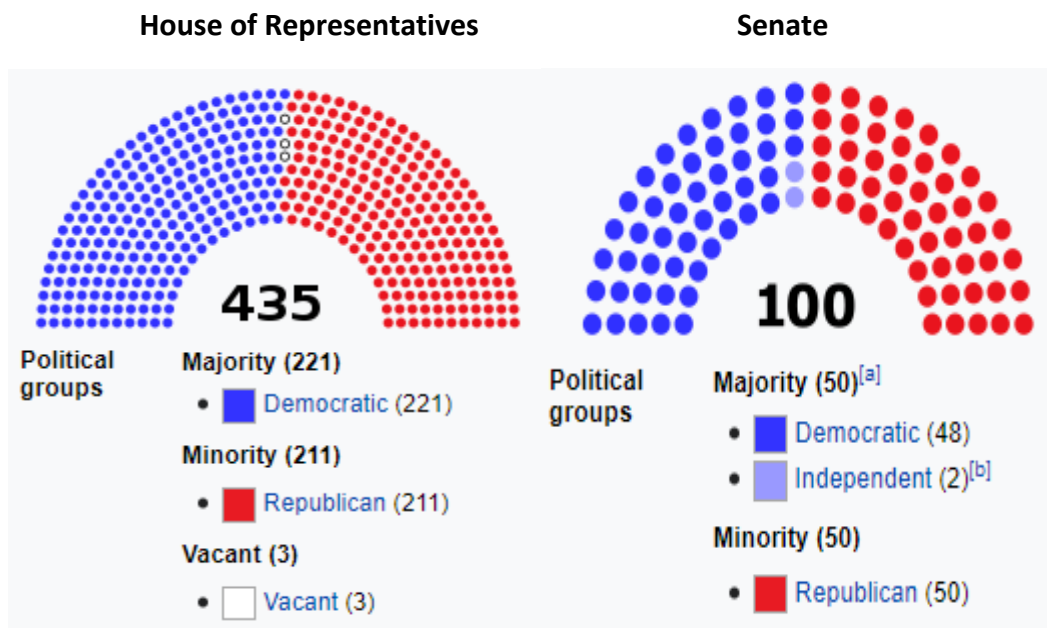
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## 117th Congress: Who to Contact for Affordable Housing Policy



(Source: [Wikipedia.org/wiki/117th\\_United\\_States\\_Congress](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/117th_United_States_Congress))

The 117th Congress will convene from January 3, 2021 to January 3, 2023. The House of Representatives (House) will consist of 221 Democrats and 211 Republicans (with three seats vacant), while the Senate has 50 Republicans and 50 Democratic caucus members (2 Independents caucus with Democrats) and Vice-President Kamala Harris will be the deciding vote in case of a tie in the Senate. NAHMA's mission is to advocate to Congress for the production and preservation of affordable multifamily housing. NAHMA welcomes the opportunity to work with all interested members of Congress to achieve these goals. As NAHMA reaches out to the 117th Congress on affordable housing issues, we recommend our members do the same. This NAHMAanalysis is a simple primer on the key Congressional members and committees that will likely impact affordable housing policies before the 117th Congress.

## Policy Outlook

**Pandemic Relief:** The mounting economic hardship resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic continues with millions of Americans still struggling to pay their rent. The 117th Congress will undoubtedly consider additional legislative actions to provide much needed economic relief and support.

As Congress debates how to further respond to the pandemic, NAHMA will continue to underscore the link between health and housing and advocate for additional rental assistance to ensure the continued stability and financial viability of affordable housing providers and the families they serve.

**Funding:** With Democrats taking over the House and the Senate, the 117th Congress will present many opportunities to shape the legislative and regulatory landscape, but challenges for affordable housing funding remain a primary obstacle. The previous Congress rejected drastic funding cuts and provided investments in affordable housing programs. NAHMA and our industry partners will continue to oppose any similar proposed cuts and the potential of harsh caps on domestic spending. Additionally, there is real potential for the Biden Administration and Congress to make significant increases in funding for HUD, the USDA and towards infrastructure investments, as an essential part of the Democrats' broader strategy is to ensure families have access to housing that is affordable, stable, safe, healthy, accessible, energy efficient and resilient, and located near good schools and with a reasonable commute to their jobs.

Democratic leaders in both the Senate and the House have stated that their affordable housing policies and legislative agenda in the new Congress will focus on:

- Fully funding federal affordable housing assistance programs
- Ending redlining and other discriminatory and unfair practices in the housing market
- Improving the quality of housing, including through investments in energy efficiency, addressing lead hazards and advancing environmental justice
- Expanding the use of tax credits to encourage opportunity and investment in neighborhoods that are often home to vulnerable populations and marked by stagnant housing markets, foreclosures, and blighted or vacant homes
- Providing financial assistance to help individuals and families buy or rent safe, quality housing, especially in communities of color
- Promoting greater economic mobility, and providing greater household stability and improved wellness outcomes
- Pursuing a comprehensive approach to ending homelessness

- Incorporating significant affordable housing investments in infrastructure reform, including increasing the construction and preservation of the nation's affordable housing stock

Due to the partisan nature of Congress, NAHMA believes the industry will have to work hard with both Democrats and Republicans in order to ensure agreement on important housing legislation. NAHMA will continue to build on overall increases in spending for federally-subsidized housing programs in the 117th Congress and we are committed to working with Members of Congress from both political parties to protect funding for affordable housing programs.

**Legislation:** NAHMA believes the House Financial Services Committee and the Senate Banking and Housing Committee will focus heavily on housing programs and funding, fair housing, and oversight.

**Tax:** NAHMA believes the House Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Finance Committee will focus on infrastructure investments, including key affordable housing provisions. While 2020 ended with the enactment of a permanent minimum 4 percent Housing Credit rate, NAHMA expects further legislation to expand and strengthen LIHTC will be introduced. Key provisions from the Moving Forward Act, an infrastructure bill passed in the House last year, could potentially be incorporated into infrastructure or stimulus legislation in the 117th Congress, including expanding LIHTC production, increasing LIHTC credits for projects that target deeper affordability, extending key compliance deadlines that help LIHTC developers and operators stay afloat, and a significant expansion of Private Activity Bonds.

## **House Leadership**

**Speaker of the House:** Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)

The Speaker of the House is third in the line of succession for the Presidency, behind the Vice-President. The Speaker controls the agenda for the House.

**Majority Leader:** Steny Hoyer (D-MD)

The Majority Leader schedules votes on the House floor, and is charged with making sure the proverbial “trains run on time.” He will likely oversee the day-to-day operations of the legislative agenda.

**Minority Leader:** Kevin McCarthy (R-CA)

The Minority Leader is the recognized leader of the party with fewer members.

## **Senate Leadership**

The Senate is functioning under a power-sharing agreement due to the 50-50 split in Senate seats held by each party. The power-sharing agreement includes equal party representation on all Senate committees; equal division of committee staffs between the

parties; eligibility of Senators from both parties to preside over the Senate; and general provisions seeking to reiterate the equal interest of both parties in the scheduling of Senate chamber business. Democrats chair the committees, but legislation and nominations that get a tie vote in committee would still be sent to the floor for a vote by the full Senate. Vice-President Kamala Harris would cast the tie-breaking vote in case of a 50-50 tie vote.

**Majority Leader:** Chuck Schumer (D-NY)

In the Senate, an individual becomes Majority Leader if he was the elected leader of his party and has the most Senators caucusing, or aligning themselves, with his party. The Senate Majority Leader's job is to set the agenda for each chamber; he decides what business comes to the Senate floor, and when it gets a vote.

**Minority Leader:** Mitch McConnell (R-KY)

The Senate Minority Leader is the recognized head of his or her party. He is generally the person who tries to ensure that his party members get an opportunity to vote on desired amendments, and negotiates time agreements on debate and amendments with the Majority Leader.

## **House Committees**

Each political party has its own rules for choosing committee chairmen. Committee chairs control the legislative agenda, schedule, and enjoy subpoena power. They are members of the majority party. Ranking Members of the committees represent the minority party. They do not control the agenda nor schedule of the committees, but they can be influential in crafting legislation and choosing witnesses at hearings.

### **House Financial Services Committee**

The House Financial Services Committee and its subcommittees have oversight responsibility of HUD and the Rural Housing Service. As the appropriate "authorizing committee" for housing issues, consideration of most new housing-related legislation in the House begins here.

Maxine Waters (D-CA) is the Chair of the House Financial Services Committee, while Patrick McHenry (R-NC) serves as the Ranking Member in the 117th Congress.

Emanuel Cleaver (D-MO) is the Housing, Community Development, and Insurance Subcommittee Chairman, while Steven Stivers (R-OH) is the Ranking Member on the Subcommittee.

### **House Appropriations Committee**

The Appropriations Committee decides how much money federal programs will receive each year and how the agencies will use that money. Their jurisdiction is limited to funding discretionary programs. They do not fund entitlements such as Social Security,

Medicare, and Medicaid. The Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Subcommittee is responsible for funding HUD programs. The Subcommittee on Agriculture funds USDA-RHS programs.

The Appropriations Committee Chairwoman is Nita Lowey (D-NY), and Kay Granger (R-TX) is the Committee Ranking Member.

David Price (D-NC) becomes the T-HUD Subcommittee Chairman, while Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL) serves as the Subcommittee Ranking Member.

Sanford Bishop (D-GA) serves as the Agriculture Subcommittee Chairman. Jeff Fortenberry (R-NE) is the Subcommittee Ranking Member.

### **House Ways and Means Committee**

This is the tax-writing committee and the authorizing committee for entitlement programs such as Social Security, Medicare, etc. Legislation to amend the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program falls under the jurisdiction of this committee.

Richard Neal (D-MA) is the Committee Chairman, while Kevin Brady (R-TX) is the Ranking Member.

### **Senate Committees**

While there are specific procedures followed by the Republican and Democratic Caucuses in selecting committee chairmen, the tradition of the Senate generally recognizes that the member of the majority party having the most seniority on the committee becomes chairman. Likewise, the member of the minority party who has the most seniority on the committee becomes the ranking member.

There will be a power-sharing agreement in Senate committee leadership positions due to the 50-50 split in the Senate.

### **Senate Banking, Housing, & Urban Affairs Committee**

The Banking Committee is the Senate counterpart to the House Financial Services Committee. The Subcommittee on Housing, Transportation, and Community Development is the counterpart to the House Subcommittee Housing, Community Development, and Insurance.

Sherrod Brown (D-OH) is the Chairman and Pat Toomey (R-PA) is the Vice-Chair of the Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee.

Robert Menendez (D-NJ) is the Chairman of the Housing, Transportation, and Community Development Subcommittee, and the Vice-Chair has yet to be determined.

The leaders of the Banking Committee traditionally have strong bipartisan interests in affordable housing programs.

Freshmen Senators John Ossoff (D-GA) and Raphael Warnock (D-GA) are the newest members to the Banking Committee.

### **Senate Appropriations Committee**

Like its House counterpart, the Senate Appropriations Committee decides how much money federal programs receive, and how it should be spent. The subcommittees noted fund HUD and USDA-RHS programs.

Patrick Leahy (D-VT) is the Chairman and Richard Shelby (R-AL) is the Vice-Chair of the Appropriations Committee.

Brian Schatz (D-HI) is the Chairman and Susan Collins (R-ME) is the Vice-Chair of the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies (T-HUD) Subcommittee.

Jeff Merkley (D-OR) is the Chairman and John Hoeven (R-ND) is the Vice-Chair of the Agriculture Subcommittee.

### **Senate Finance Committee**

This is the Senate counterpart to the House Ways and Means Committee. The Finance Committee has jurisdiction for LIHTC bills.

Ron Wyden (D-OR) is the Chairman and Mike Crapo (R-ID) is the Vice-Chair of the Finance Committee.

### **Conclusion**

As we enter the beginning of the Biden Administration and a new Democrat-controlled Congress focuses on pandemic relief and economic recovery, the stakes are very high for affordable housing programs. Members can find additional committee information on websites for the Senate and House. We encourage members to use NAHMA Advocacy Resources, at [www.nahma.org](http://www.nahma.org), to help educate your representatives about affordable housing in their Districts and States. If you have questions about policy issues and / or the legislative process, please know that NAHMA is here to help. A great deal of work lies ahead in 2021. With your support, we can have a positive impact for this vital industry and for the residents who need quality housing.

**Senate Committees:**

[Senate Banking, Housing, & Urban Affairs Committee](#)

[Senate Appropriations Committee](#)

[Senate Finance Committee](#)

**House Committees:**

[House Financial Services Committee](#)

[House Appropriations Committee](#)

[House Ways and Means Committee](#)