



MnAHT = Tenant Empowerment

We can work with you to take action and save your home! The Minnesota Alliance of HUD Tenants (MnAHT) tenant leaders will come to your building and speak to your tenant association. Don't have a tenant association? We can help you build one!

MnAHT is an organization of tenant leaders who live in HUD buildings in Minnesota. We have fought to keep our homes decent, safe, and affordable and we can work with you so that you can keep your home affordable too!

MnAHT meets once a month for about an hour to discuss affordable housing issues, how to address them, and how to inform others about what's happening. Come to learn more about us, what you can do to help us, or just to observe!

**Want to find out more?
For information call the
tenant organizers at
HOME Line:**

612-728-5770

**Eric @ ext. 108
Julia @ ext. 119**

*Interested in getting
more involved in afford-
able housing issues?*

Surf over to:

<http://www.mnaht.org>
*The Minnesota Alliance
of HUD Tenants internet
home.*

The President's budget will cut what...?

We know that it's no fun to read the budget, so we got someone else to do it for us. It doesn't look so good!

President Bush's proposed 2006 budget would cut:

- \$60 Billion from Medicaid over the next 5 years
- \$43 Billion from children's education programs over the next 5 years
- \$4.7 Billion from Community Development for low and moderate income communities
- \$2.9 Billion would be cut from Section 8 over the next five years (*this means a loss of over 370,000 Section 8 vouchers nationwide by 2010!*)
- \$1 Billion from food stamps over the next 5 years
- \$200 Million from Public Housing
- \$120 Million from Disabled Housing
- \$14 Million from Fair Housing
- \$13 Million from AIDS Housing

(statistics from from the National Low-Income Housing Coalition)

Thank you to the Christian Sharing Fund for providing MnAHT with the grant to fund our Outreach Campaign and this newsletter!



HOME Line
3455 Bloomington Ave. S.
Minneapolis, MN 55407

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Minneapolis, MN

Important Information for the Resident of:

TAKE ACTION: CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATORS ABOUT THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET!

We are all represented by two U.S. Senators:
Senator Mark Dayton,
Washington D.C.: **202/224-3244**
Senator Norm Coleman,
Washington D.C.: **202/224-5641**

We each have 1 U.S. Representative:
If you need to know who your U.S. Representative is call:
202/224-3121
TTY: 202/225-1904

Ask to speak to their budget staff person, and let them know:

1. *You live in their district*
2. *You do not support cutting programs for low income Americans.*
3. *There are better ways to balance the budget than on the backs of the poor, like rolling back tax breaks to millionaires and big corporations.*



Renters' Rights

www.MnAHT.org

Tenant Empowerment

THE MINNESOTA ALLIANCE OF HUD TENANTS



An Affiliate of the National Alliance of HUD Tenants

WHAT IS MNAHT?

The Minnesota Alliance of HUD Tenants (MnAHT) is a group of low-income renters who work to keep housing in Minnesota decent, safe and affordable. We all live in subsidized or low-rent housing, just like you.

The articles in this newsletter will provide a glimpse at the attack being waged on affordable housing.

Read about:

- The President's Budget Proposal, its damaging effects on Section 8 and other important programs, and what it means to you (page 1, 4)
The Governor's Proposal to Cut the Renter's Credit and what we can do to stop it (page 2)
One City's Attack on affordable housing and how tenants like you organized to save housing (page 3)
Day on the Hill for Housing at the Minnesota State Capitol (page 3)
MnAHT Action Alerts - get involved! (page 2)

Tenants: critical time for affordable housing

Our housing and the programs that protect our housing are being attacked. Rent is rising, Section 8 contracts ending. The state government is trying to take away the renters credit/rebate, take more out of our social security, disability and/or welfare checks and spend less on low-rent housing. The federal government is cutting away at the Section 8 voucher program (they're even considering putting time limits on how long we could live in Section 8 housing). Some cities are trying to tear down the apartments that low-income people call home.

People just like you have gotten involved in MnAHT and

gotten things done: When owners were trying to take away affordable housing, we've helped to save it in cities like Brooklyn Park, Saint Louis Park, Robbinsdale, Byron, Forest Lake, and Hopkins. We've testified at the state capitol and made sure that money is set aside to pay for the kind of housing that we all live in. We traveled to Washington, DC and were able to prevent huge cutbacks in the Section 8 voucher program.

We still have a lot to do, and we have our work cut out for us, in order to see that we all have a decent, safe, affordable place to call home. This work gets done by people like you joining us to make

phone calls, write letters, meet with legislators, do interviews with the media, attend protests, etc. Your involvement, on any level, is important!

And about those elected officials who are supposed to be representing us in Saint Paul and in Washington, DC? We are going to make sure that they hear from us because, after all, we are the ones who voted them in, and we can always vote them out! We are the ones who pay their salaries with our tax dollars and we deserve to be taken seriously! Read on in this newsletter to hear about what we need to get done and how we can do it together.

Bush: no resources for affordable housing

The President wants to balance the budget on the backs of the poor, but we can still stop him

Every year the President proposes a plan for how the United States government will spend its money. After the President comes out with his budget, Congress is able to make changes to the budget, and then Congress votes and the President signs it into law for the next year.

The President has recently unveiled his budget proposal for 2006 and if he gets his way, there will be large cuts to programs for low-income Americans, including: the Section 8 program, education, food stamps, Medicaid, and veteran's benefits. If the President has his way 300,000 families will lose their food stamps in 2006. And, he wants to cut more money from these programs every year, for the next five years. Clearly these cuts, which don't even balance the

budget, are directed at low and middle income Americans, but millionaires are getting a big tax break.

MnAHT member Patty said, "We are always getting told to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps. Well, how are you suppose to pull yourself up from your bootstraps if you don't have any boots?"

The President has been trying to make cuts to the Section 8 program for the past five years! People like Patty have been calling their Senators and Representative in Congress, telling them how important these programs are and asking them to vote against cuts to the Section 8 program. As a result so far,

Congress has been making sure the Section 8 program gets the money it needs.

"The President has been trying to make cuts to the Section 8 program for the past five years!"

If you want to make sure that programs like Section 8, education, food stamps, Medicaid and veteran's benefits get the funding they need, call your U.S. Senators and Representative.

Check Page 4 to find out how to contact your elected officials and for more information about how President Bush's budget will harm affordable housing programs.

MORE INFORMATION AND WAYS TO GET INVOLVED INSIDE >>>>



Get involved - join the MnAHT Action Group

Stay up-to-date on important affordable housing issues like the ones in this newsletter, and work with MnAHT to protect yourself and other tenants in Minnesota by joining the MnAHT Action Group!

As part of the Action Group you'll be part of a statewide organization fighting for affordable housing. MnAHT will send you action alerts, through the mail or by e-mail, regarding new developments in public policy and laws affecting affordable housing in Minnesota.

These alerts go out to tenants throughout the state whenever an issue arises. The alerts inform tenants of the issue and help them understand it. They advise tenants to call their legislators and help them form what to say to their legislators. Due to our action alerts, legislators are swamped by calls in support of affordable housing. This lets them know that we're watching what they do!

Pam, a resident in Raspberry Ridge Cooperative apartments in Hopkins participates in the Action Alert group because she wants to keep her legislators accountable to her. Pam explains, "Action alerts are very important, as they give tenants a chance to learn about important affordable housing issues that affect us personally. I make sure to tell my neighbors about it, too!"

"I can tell you truthfully that it makes the legislators sit up and take notice. If you don't do it, they think you don't care, and they ignore affordable housing issues," says Pam.

Being involved in the

Big cuts to your Renters' Credit check

Governor Pawlenty said he wouldn't raise taxes, but he is increasing taxes for people who are renters. We believe by proposing to make cuts to the renters' credit program, a tax relief for renters, he is balancing the budget on the backs of the poor. Home owners receive tax relief through the home mortgage interest deduction, but he has not proposed any cut in that program!

This increased tax will deeply affect those of us who are low- and moderate- income and depend on our rent credit each year to catch up on bills, buy groceries, school supplies and clothes, and cover other expenses. Over thirty million dollars will be taken from the renter's credit program this year, and more will be taken from the program in 2007 if this passes.

Linda, a tenant in St. Louis Park, relies on her renters' credit money each year to stock her pantry, winterize her car, and purchase necessities she can't otherwise afford throughout the year. Last year she received

about \$560.00 from her renter's credit. She did the math and, if the Governor's proposal passes, she will get \$149.00 LESS for her rent credit this year than she would get if this proposal doesn't pass!

Legislators don't think we, as renters, will call them and say NO! Both your State Representative and your State Senator have to vote on the Governor's proposal. We have a chance to prevent these cuts if we all put pressure on our legislators and tell them to vote against cutting our renter's credit!

If you don't want your renters' credit cut call Governor Pawlenty at 651-296-3391 and call your state legislators to tell them:*

- Don't cut my renters' credit.
- My renters' credit is important to me because... (tell them what you need the money for)
- Stop subsidizing homeowners with mansions who are allowed to reduce their taxable income by thousands of dollars each year

through the mortgage interest deduction.

• Capping the amount of mortgage interest people with mansions can deduct on their taxes would provide revenue for the state (\$356.8 million in 2005 alone!) without placing the burden of a tax increase on those of us who can least afford it. (Only people who have incomes of \$45,970 or less per year get the renters' credit.)

For more information on how to get involved in fighting this cut, or for help in doing the math to find out how much YOU stand to lose if this passes, call HOME Line at 612-728-5770 ext. 119.

**The Governor represents everyone in the state but who your State Representative and State Senator are depends on where you live.*

To find out who your State Representative is call 651-296-2146. To find out who your State Senator is call 651-296-0504.

“Legislators don't think we, as renters, will call them and say NO!”

Action Alert group is a good way for people to be effective in what happens with affordable housing issues, it's easy, and it only takes a few minutes to make a phone call. If you join the group and are unsure about an issue, a phone number to call for more information is always listed on the alert. Imagine the strong, loud message we low-income tenants can send to the legislature if we all participate in the action group!

To receive Action Alerts (including our most recent alert about the Renters' Credit cuts) please either visit the MnAHT website at www.mnaht.org or see the "MnAHT = Tenant Empowerment" article on Page 4.



MnAHT tenant leaders celebrate after their first successful Tenant Empowerment Workshop - a tenant-led event sharing organizing experiences, tenant rights information, and voter education.

MnAHT would like to thank the following businesses for their support: CUB FOODS (PLYMOUTH), PANERA BREAD (PLYMOUTH), RAINBOW FOODS (PLYMOUTH), LUNDS (PLYMOUTH), PAPA JOHN'S PIZZA (PLYMOUTH), RICK'S SUPER VALUE MARKET (PLYMOUTH), BYERLY'S (MINNETONKA) Without their contributions, our tenant workshop would not have been such a great success. We look forward to seeing YOU at our next workshop!



Your city may be trying to get rid of affordable housing!

Recently in Brooklyn Park a local business owner, a Metropolitan Council Member, a Minnesota State Senator, and a handful of homeowners blamed the low- and middle- income people who live in affordable, lower rent apartments in the city for the city's bad reputation.

Without any studies or attention to statistics from the police department - which in fact showed a steady drop in crime in the apartments - and without community input, especially from members of Brooklyn Park's large immigrant population and the tenants who would be affected by the demolition, they tried to tear down almost 1,000 affordable apartments in the city.

This exclusive group presented their idea to the Brooklyn Park City Council, and the Council agreed to ask the community to vote November 2nd, 2004 on a 35 million dollar referendum to increase property taxes in order to demolish these peoples' homes.

If people hadn't gotten involved, almost 1,000 low- and middle- income families would have lost their homes, been forced to move away from their jobs, schools, civic organizations, support networks, doctors, churches, family, friends, and neighbors.

Tenants, homeowners, affordable housing advocates, members of the immigrant community, and others organized and worked to educate the community on the issue and to encourage them to get out and vote "no" on the Brooklyn Park referendum. Due to the organizing efforts, a record number of people registered, voted, and defeated the referendum to demolish affordable apartments!

Unfortunately, this will not be

the last attempt to get rid of affordable housing in Brooklyn Park; it was not the first. In 1994 the city of Brooklyn Park and a developer tried to gentrify affordable apartments and drastically raise the rents to price people out of the city. From 1996 through 1999 the city tried to demolish 1,140 affordable apartments but again, because tenants organized and worked with affordable housing advocates and attorneys they were successful in preventing the city from carrying out their plans.

Recently a group of people who care about affordable housing formed an organization to work to see that ALL people in the community have a voice in any community redevelopment plans in Brooklyn Park. The group's name is Community Action Redevelopment Effort (CARE). CARE will include tenants, homeowners, housing advocates and city staff, and will work on COMMUNITY based redevelopment issues in the city.

Other cities are closely watching Brooklyn Park's efforts to dispel affordable housing because they want to get rid of affordable housing in their city too.

We need to protect affordable housing and change the perception that low-income housing has a negative affect on a community. The consequences of losing our housing are too grave: displacement out of our communities, homelessness, or paying exorbitant rent prices that force us to sacrifice other necessities.

Get involved on any level - making phone calls, writing letters, attending meetings, etc. and help MnAHT save affordable housing for ourselves, your

Housing Day on the Hill at the State Capitol: *WHAT ISSUES ARE IMPORTANT TO YOU?*

After reading through this newsletter, did it surprise you to discover our legislators are attempting to cut so many housing programs this year? Do you think there is a need for more affordable housing options? Would you like to be involved in the political process to bring awareness to these affordable housing issues?

Join us for the 2005 "Housing Day on the Hill" on Thursday, March 10, 2005—the day to highlight housing issues at the Minnesota State Capitol. At this event hundreds of tenants, concerned citizens, and housing advocates will gather at the Capitol to tell their State Representatives and Senators not to harm those least able to weather the economic downturn. This is an opportunity for you to tell your state legislators that you don't want your renters' credit cut!

You don't have to go alone! We'll go in small groups to meet with our legislators. These meetings are scheduled to take place anytime between 9:30 AM and 3:00 PM. These meetings will be scheduled for different times through out the day for different people. You will only

attend meetings with the people who represent you so you probably will not have to be there the whole day. We'll meet at 9:30 AM in the Great Hall of the State Capitol. When you arrive we'll let you know where and when your meetings will be.

Jack, a MnAHT member and tenant in Emerson Chalet Apartments in Brooklyn Center, has attended the Housing Day on the Hill for a number of years. "My State Representative and Senator both know that I'm always here, making sure that they'll make the right decision when it comes to affordable housing," says Jack, "...and it doesn't hurt to stop in every year on Housing Day on the Hill to remind them!"

Bring your family, friends, and coworkers to this important event and let your legislators know how important affordable housing and homelessness issues are to you.

For more information or to register free of charge, contact Eric at HOME Line: 612/728-5770 ext. 108. We can also provide transportation on a first come, first served, limited basis, if needed.



SAVE THE DATE...

Housing Day on the Hill

Thursday, March 10th 2005

9:30 AM to 3:00 PM

The Great Hall

Minnesota State Capitol

75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

family, friends and neighbors, and for future generations who will need an affordable place to live.

Please see the "MnAHT = Tenant Empowerment" article on Page 4 for information about how you can get involved and help preserve decent, safe, and affordable housing in Minnesota.