

Grassley Urges Key Senators on Housing Oversight, Citing Scandals Across the Country

Written by Grassley Press

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WASHINGTON – Sen. Chuck Grassley of Iowa today urged key fellow senators to help ensure the appropriate spending of tax dollars after housing authority scandals across the country have revealed wasted funding and abuse of the public trust in a vacuum of oversight.

“For more than two years, I’ve urged Secretary Shaun Donovan and the Department of Housing and Urban Development to perform more oversight of the billions of federal dollars that go to local housing authorities,” Grassley said. “The agency has taken a few positive steps, but progress has been too slow. The agency seems to get involved in oversight of local housing authorities only after the fact, when the abuse has occurred and local media have documented the problems. For the public benefit, we need to reverse the timeframe. HUD and local housing authorities need to prevent malfeasance on the front end, not chase it after the fact when it’s too late. I hope the senators responsible for HUD funding and programs will step in and help me reverse the lax oversight that harms the people who need safe, affordable housing and the taxpayers alike.”

Grassley said a positive step he helped to extract from HUD, amid several high salary scandals, was the agency’s implementation of a new requirement that the public housing authorities provide HUD with documentation of salaries and other compensation. Unfortunately, the effect of the positive step was limited because HUD made only aggregate information public, and Grassley is pushing for full disclosure of housing authority salaries and perks. Grassley also has worked with local media in areas including Philadelphia, Chelsea, Mass., and Harris County, Texas, to spotlight bad actors and questionable activities to help bring about tangible changes in how those housing authorities are run.

“Even with the positive steps, much more work is necessary,” Grassley said. “The country has

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thousands of local housing authorities spending billions of federal dollars. Those who are tempted to abuse the system have too much leeway due to a lack of oversight. This has to change, sooner rather than later. The senators who control the purse strings and housing policy are in a key position to exact change.”

Grassley appealed for help to Sen. Patty Murray, chairman, and Sen. Susan Collins, ranking member, of the Committee on Appropriations’ Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development, and Related Agencies, as well as Sen. Robert Menendez, chairman, and Sen. Jim DeMint, ranking member, Subcommittee on Housing, Transportation, and Community Development of the Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs. Grassley included an article from the Boston Globe that reported on numerous problems plaguing public housing authorities in Massachusetts and said the same problems have been found at housing authorities “large and small across the country.” He also listed his concerns about HUD conference spending, housing authority take-home vehicle abuses, and the need for greater transparency of public housing authority executive director compensation packages.

In one example of housing authority-owned vehicle abuse, the executive director of the Albuquerque, New Mexico, housing authority was documented taking her housing authority vehicle to get her nails done on Friday afternoons. She was fired after a local television station reported on her outings, according to media reports.

The text of Grassley’s letters to the senators with key committee jurisdiction over federal housing are available [here](#) and [here](#) .

The text of Grassley’s letter to HUD on take-home vehicle abuse is available [here](#) .

An Albuquerque television station’s account of the nail salon scandal is available [here](#) . The Washington Post’s coverage is available [here](#) .

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