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## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan Addresses the Native Housing Budget During the Plenary Session at NAIHC Legislative Conference; Senator Byron Dorgan Speaks Wednesday Afternoon**

WASHINGTON—February 25, 2010—The National American Indian Housing Council (NAIHC), the only national organization advocating solely on Indian housing issues, opened its plenary session, *Inside the Beltway: A Housing Update*, on Wednesday with an address from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Secretary Shaun Donovan. It is the first time in the history of the NAIHC Legislative Conference that any Secretary has attended the event.

“The Secretary has seen first hand the deplorable housing conditions in our tribal communities. He’s visited villages in Alaska and tribes in Montana, and his appearance at our Conference presented an opportunity for the NAIHC membership to share with the Secretary our great housing needs first hand,” said NAIHC Chairman Marty Shuravloff. “Despite the very real concerns NAIHC has regarding the funding levels for Indian housing programs, and in particular the Indian Housing Block Grant program, NAIHC remains optimistic that we can work effectively with President Obama and his Administration. The Secretary’s presence with us here gives us even more reason to be optimistic.”

Secretary Donovan stood before one hundred concerned tribal housing professionals to discuss the President’s Proposed Budget Request to Congress, which slashes funding for the Indian Housing Block Grant by 17 percent.

“Ensuring federally-supported Native American housing is on sustainable footing requires the federal government to change the way it does business,” said HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan. “To do that, HUD is initiating a comprehensive needs assessment in coordination with tribal leadership, as well as our federal and state partners. The assessment and the partnerships we build will help us develop a long-term and long-overdue economic and community reinvestment strategy that looks not only at housing but other obstacles to building sustainable communities in Indian Country, including access to quality healthcare, schools, transportation and employment.”

Other federal agency representatives who addressed the plenary session are: Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs Larry EchoHawk, U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development Deputy Under Secretary Victor Vasquez and U.S. Census Bureau Director Robert Groves. Jacqueline Johnson Pata, Executive Director of the National Congress of American Indians, also addressed the audience about current legislative issues the organization is concerned with.

In the afternoon, the NAIHC Legislative Conference attendees moved to the Hearing Room for the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs to hear from Congressional leaders and staffers on key legislation and policies affecting housing. Senator Byron Dorgan (D-ND), Chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, started the afternoon session by expressing his disappointment in the President's fiscal year 2011 budget request and the proposed reductions in the Indian Housing Block Grant funding.

"I will not let it [budget] go by without significant challenges. There must be ample and robust funding for Indian housing," Sen. Dorgan said. "Shelter is a basic human need and this budget needs to be substantially changed. Adequate funding for Indian housing should be available for our First Americans."

Several other Members of Congress addressed the NAIHC membership. Those Members are Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Congresswoman Ann Kirkpatrick (D-1<sup>st</sup>-AZ), Senator Jon Tester (D-MT), Senator Tom Udall (D-NM), Congressman Tom Cole (R-4<sup>th</sup>-OK) and Congressman Martin Heinrich (D-1<sup>st</sup>-NM).

All of the Administration and Congressional speakers agreed on one important issue: more funding is needed for Indian housing.

NAIHC's Legislative Conference continues with a listening session on the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* funding at the offices of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development on Thursday. Also, NAIHC Chairman Shuravloff will be testifying at the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs oversight hearing on the President's proposed budget on Thursday afternoon.

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*The National American Indian Housing Council (NAIHC) was founded in 1974 as a 501(c)(3) corporation. NAIHC is the only national organization representing housing interests of Native people who reside in Indian communities, Alaska Native Villages, and on native Hawaiian Home Lands.*