

Remarks of Senator Patrick Leahy
NeighborWorks Legislative Day
April 5, 2011

Thank you Ludy for that introduction. It is great to see a number of familiar faces here from Vermont. Mert and Michael, thank you for being here to represent your organizations.

I am sure that when you planned your legislative day, you did not expect that both the 2011 and 2012 budgets would be topics of current event conversation. However I think it is a testament to the work that you all do that amid all the calls for budget cuts, funding for NeighborWorks has mostly been off the table.

As the country struggles to bounce back from the deepest recession since the Great Depression, Congress has reaffirmed its belief that we need a strong housing market and clear paths to homeownership through the creation and extension of programs like the First Time Homebuyers Tax Credit. We have backed homeownership counseling efforts and programs to educate families before they purchase a home. Other programs have centered on trying to help families facing foreclosure through counseling or emergency loans.

While all of these efforts are important, I would assert that some of the most significant work being done to create jobs, make sustained investments in affordable housing and to stabilize struggling communities is being done by organizations in this room. That belief is backed up by the effort I have led to add funding to the NeighborWorks budget for capital improvements. I am thankful that my colleagues Senator Murray, Senator Inouye and former Senator Bond all agree with me that your good work is worthy of this support.

I understand the video that was put together for this evening highlighted affiliates from all around the country. Now I am a little biased, but I think that the NeighborWorks affiliates in Vermont are some of the best and that the whole video could have been focused on them. Each is a dynamic organization doing creative work.

Champlain Housing Trust has been a leader in utilizing a shared equity model to promote homeownership. NeighborWorks of Western Vermont has made it a priority to help ensure that low income Vermonters have energy efficient homes. Rockingham Area Community Land Trust was recently a partner in what has to be one of the single largest housing renovation projects in Vermont. Gilman Housing Trust runs a rehab loan program in the most economically depressed part of Vermont. And Central Vermont Community Land Trust operates more programs than I can count.

The amazing thing about NeighborWorks is that the diversity of programming I just described, is replicated throughout the country. That, again, is why so many of my colleagues have joined me in standing up to support your mission. Thank you again and I look forward to continuing to be a staunch advocate for your goals in this Congress and as you continue toward your 50th anniversary.

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