



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 98th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 130

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 25, 1984

No. 3

House of Representatives

THE PLIGHT OF HOMELESS AMERICANS

HON. JERRY M. PATTERSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 25, 1984

Mr. PATTERSON. Mr. Speaker, I wish today to express my deep concern for the many Americans who each night must seek shelter in cars, under bridges and in public parks because they cannot locate emergency shelter or afford housing of a more permanent nature. The steadily growing numbers of homeless people in this, the wealthiest Nation on Earth, is a disgrace.

The capacity of local social service agencies and nonprofit organizations to provide temporary shelters and basic assistance to the growing class of families and individuals without permanent residence is being severely tested. Let us not be misled—this problem is not limited to the inner-cities of our metropolitan areas but now has spread to the more affluent suburban communities and rural areas as well. Recent surveys have estimated that between 250,000 and 2 million Americans, spread over urban, suburban and rural areas have no permanent home.

On January 25, the Subcommittee on Housing and Community Development held hearings to gather additional information on the nature and extent of homelessness in America and the response of the Federal Government to this problem. During this important hearing, Ms. Mary Ann Gaido, housing specialist for the Orange County, Calif., Human Relations Commission, described the scope of homelessness within Orange County and the efforts of both local government and nonprofit organizations to address the problem. Ms. Gaido also detailed the frustrations experienced by these communities and organizations in attempting to identify Federal assistance which might be available to assist in sheltering the homeless.

In fact, very little financial assist-

ance is available through federally sponsored programs and what assistance may have been available in the past has been sharply curtailed by the Reagan administration. Deep cuts in housing assistance and other social programs by the Federal Government over the past 3 years have been a very significant factor in the rapid rise in the numbers of homeless Americans. We now must address the consequences of these reductions in assistance to our neediest citizens by working with local government and nonprofit agencies to provide, at a minimum, emergency help for those without any shelter.

Section 216 of the recently passed Housing and Urban-Rural Recovery Act of 1983, authorizes a \$60 million grant program to States, units of general local government and nonprofit organizations for the purpose of developing and maintaining emergency shelters for the homeless. However, no funds have been appropriated for this program and the Department of Housing and Urban Development will not begin developing regulations to implement section 216 until an appropriation is made. I believe Congress must proceed immediately to appropriate funds for the emergency shelter program and that HUD should then move swiftly to issue implementing regulations. There are communities and nonprofit organizations across this country, including the Santa Ana-based Feedback Foundation within my district, which are ready today to begin a partnership with the Federal Government to provide shelters for the homeless. We must begin to tap these valuable resources without further delay.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to support the efforts of the Orange County Human Relations Commission in addressing this important problem. I extend my deepest appreciation to Ms. Gaido and the commission for their assistance in contributing to the work of the subcommittee in preparing for the homelessness hearings.