

Financial Services Committee Amendment Summaries
On Amendments to HR 1851, the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007

- **Waters Manager's Amendment:** Includes provisions to increase rent structure flexibility while maintaining affordability requirements, an increase up to 12.5 percent in first year permitted housing agency voucher reserves, provisions spelling out HUD responsibilities with respect to access to HUD programs for persons with Limited English Proficiency, modifications to voucher inspection requirements, and changes to the Housing Innovation Program.
- **Velázquez amendment:** Requires that public housing agencies selected for participation in the Housing Innovation Program must comply with voucher and public housing domestic violence provisions from the Violence Against Women Act.
- **Gary Miller/Chabot amendment:** Imposes a 7-year time limit on participation in the Section 8 program. The amendment excludes the elderly and disabled from this requirement and provides for a hardship exception.

Democratic Staff Note: The amendment would arbitrarily terminate families from the voucher program after 7 years, even if they are working and still have severe rent affordability burdens. The amendment would likely increase the number of homeless families, by evicting families who cannot afford an apartment, thus imposing an additional social services burden on local communities. Moreover, the bill already includes new provisions to end assistance for voucher holders when they are no longer low-income, when their assets exceed certain levels, and when they also own a residence otherwise suitable for occupancy.

- **Markey/Pryce (OH) amendment:** The provisions in this amendment will preserve housing that is affordable for low-income families. The first part of the amendment makes certain low-income tenants of the Heritage Apartments in Malden, Massachusetts eligible for enhanced housing vouchers after prepayment of a HUD mortgage and subsequent ownership transfer of the property without HUD restrictions that may jeopardize the housing affordability. The second part of the amendment would allow for the transfer of Section 8 Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contracts in Columbus, Ohio in the University District and in Cincinnati, Ohio in the Over-the-Rhine Community.

Chabot amendment: Strikes the authorization of appropriations for the creation of 20,000 new vouchers each year for years FY 2008 through FY 2012.

Democratic Staff Note: The amendment would impede efforts to reduce Section 8 voucher waiting lists. It would eliminate a provision adopted in committee by voice vote to authorize 20,000 new Section 8 vouchers a year. The vouchers were authorized to respond to the fact that HUD reports that there are 6 million families with “worst case housing needs,” and there are 150,000 fewer families receiving a voucher than just 3 years ago, due to inefficiencies in funding formula changes instituted by the Bush Administration at that time.

- **Hensarling/Chabot:** Requires that all adults in a household that have received Section 8 voucher assistance for more than 7 consecutive years must perform 20-hours of approved “work activities.” Exemptions are provided for seniors, disabled, those exempt from TANF work requirements, and those without child care for children under the age of 6.

Democratic Staff Note: This is a drastic proposal, which is costly and inefficient, affecting not just prospective federally assisted tenants, but also all families and individuals currently using a voucher or living in Section 8 project-based housing. It has not been requested by the Administration. It would be impossible to administer this proposal on tenants scattered all over the community. It imposes a new unfunded mandate on private sector landlords owning federally assisted housing, forcing them to assume the role of a welfare agency. It would impose a significant new cost on taxpayers by raising costs incurred by public housing agencies, and diverting these agencies from their primary responsibility of administering voucher and public housing programs. The amendment does not provide any time frame for the 20 hour requirement, ie, whether it applies weekly, monthly, or yearly. It reflects a negative view of the families it applies to by singling them out for an ill-defined work requirement that does not apply to other families and individuals receiving federal assistance.

The bill already includes a number of provisions to encourage work and self-sufficiency, including reducing work disincentives related to earned income increases, expanding the use of self-sufficiency coordinators to help families get jobs, changing targeting rules to make it easier for rural low income working families to receive a voucher, and making vouchers more flexible so that they can be used for first-time homeownership.