

For the past eight years, we have been living in this cloud of corporate misdeeds, back room dealings, and extreme tax cuts that have only benefited the wealthiest. Due to a lack of government oversight, intervention and the desire to handle these issues by the Bush administration, the perfect storm of a housing crisis, collapse of the stock market and rising health care cost. We are now faced with the toughest economic times in our lifetime.

In 2008, nearly 4 million jobs were lost across the nation. In February of this year, the Greater Cleveland unemployment rate was at a staggering 10.2%. The overall African American unemployment rate is even greater--currently over 13%. In these dire times, something must be done to help our nation and our people get back on their feet. The best way to address these issues and illustrate our desire to better the lives of so many Americans in need is with our budget priorities for the upcoming fiscal year.

I want to thank President Obama for this thoughtful budget that signals "A New Era of Responsibility." I want to applaud his attention to our nation's most urgent needs-- job training and creation, health care, and education. I would like to thank him for the particular attention that this budget gives to the mental health of our

veterans. Finally, I applaud this administration for paying attention to those that need us the most, our children and our elderly.

As the former mayor of Warrensville Heights, Ohio and on behalf of local leaders in general, I want to focus on the administration's full funding of Community Development Block Grants. The fiscal year 2010 budget provides \$4.5 billion to fully fund this program. As legislators, our number one priority is to get ourselves out of our current economic crisis. To accomplish this, we must look to programs that help improve and grow our economy. Historically, for every \$1 of funding through CDBG, nearly \$3 is leveraged for economic development projects. When a city needs a grocery store or more affordable housing, this block grant funding is utilized and helps build neighborhoods. This is one of the few programs where the money goes directly to the locality. It does not get tied up in state government or federal affairs. The money immediately goes to the areas where local leaders can help expand economic opportunities for their local citizens.

In Cleveland, Community Development Block Grant dollars have gone to assist our Housing Trust Fund. Every dollar of investment leverages five dollars of private investment. In 2008, Housing Trust Fund funds were committed to projects that supported nearly 700 energy efficient housing units.

This money has also gone to combat foreclosure. CDBG funds are the principle source of funds for supporting a range of activity to respond to the aftermath of foreclosures. This year, block grants can provide \$300,000 for anti-predatory lending programming administered by Cleveland's Department of Consumer Affairs and non-profit agencies, over \$400,000 for code enforcement, and \$890,000 for nuisance abatement and land re-utilization on properties that are either vacant or have been through foreclosure/

Community Development Block Grant dollars will also help with Housing Services for low to moderate income families. These funds are a critical source of assistance for seniors and low income families with funding to repair their homes. This year, over \$2.2 million is expected to be used for home repair assistance from CDBG funds.

This grant will also help community based organizations. Approximately \$8 million supports a network of organizations that provide housing services, neighborhood safety programs, and community outreach.

Finally, CDBG funding will help city-wide services. Housing and financial services such as foreclosure counseling, home ownership counseling, landlord-tenant counseling, and fair housing assistance. The funds also support non-profits that offer social services such as educational programming for youth and food programs for our seniors and low income families.