



ACORN Katrina Organizing Update

Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now

Since Hurricane Katrina, ACORN has consistently organized for the right of all New Orleans residents to return and rebuild. With the flood recovery guidance documents released on April 12th, it appears that FEMA and the Bush administration have finally gotten the message that providing more money to strengthen the levees and allowing all New Orleans residents to return are the right things to do. What follows is a summary of ACORN's most recent organizing efforts to ensure that the right decisions keep getting made.

Actions in Washington, DC

Over 400 members of the **ACORN Katrina Survivors Association** arrived by bus in Washington, DC on February 8th for the **ACORN Rally for Return and Rebuilding** to press the Bush administration and Congress to provide the funds to rebuild New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. One week later, the Bush administration announced that it would ask Congress for another \$4.2 billion to repair, rebuild or buy flood-damaged homes in Louisiana. The next day, Bush asked Congress for another \$19.8 billion for Gulf Coast hurricane relief. ACORN Katrina survivors felt proud that the series of events organized around the theme "We refuse to be forgotten!" helped push this issue back into the national spotlight.



In March, ACORN members returned to DC for ACORN's 2006 Legislative Conference. Five hundred Katrina survivors and allies rallied for rebuilding funds to be used for repair and rebuilding of homes, not just for demolition.

1,000th Home Preserved

Last December, ACORN launched the **ACORN Clean-out Demonstration Program** to clean and preserve houses in neglected New Orleans neighborhoods like the Lower 9th Ward, New Orleans East, Hollygrove/South Carrollton, and Gentilly. This March we reached our initial goal of preserving 1,000 homes, and with the continued support of student volunteers and donors, we plan to save thousands more.



1st Home Cleaned by ACORN.



1000th Home Cleaned by ACORN.

ACORN Housing Corporation Assists Homeowners

Since Hurricane Katrina, ACORN Housing has helped over 1,800 families with a variety of housing problems. ACORN Housing has: worked with 14 lenders and servicers to remove homeowners from the New Orleans foreclosure list; designed and implemented Hurricane Related Best Practices, working with both prime and subprime lenders and conducted a 10-city "Contact Your Lender" campaign to find Katrina homeowners who were at risk of foreclosure. The **ACORN Housing Katrina Help Line provides service in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese** to help displaced homeowners establish payment agreements, halt foreclosures, get refunds on unnecessary fees, and sign up to have their homes gutted.

Neighborhood Rebuilding Plans

Following up on November's **ACORN Community Forum on Rebuilding New Orleans**, ACORN has continued to **bring together New Orleans residents and city planning experts** to develop rebuilding plans that reflect the needs and aspirations of low and moderate income communities. Since the Forum, experts from Cornell University, Louisiana State University, Columbia University, the Pratt Institute, and the New Jersey Institute for Technology have been working with residents to develop comprehensive rebuilding plans for New Orleans East and the 9th Ward.



In February, 200 ACORN members and other residents of the Lower 9th Ward rallied under the slogan "**The People Have the Right to Return**" and registered their intent to return. Later, 250 residents of the 9th Ward in New Orleans participated in a community planning meeting co-sponsored by the Cornell University Department of City and Regional Planning and the LSU School of Architecture.

New Orleans Election Participation



Louisiana ACORN and ACORN offices in Houston, San Antonio, Dallas, Little Rock, and Atlanta **reached over 8,000 New Orleans residents with information and assistance around the New Orleans Primary Election. Nearly 500 displaced voters were transported directly by ACORN to the polls**, and hundreds more drove themselves as part of ACORN's Voting Rights Caravan. ACORN organized these trips and helped residents with absentee ballots to ensure that New Orleans residents had the opportunity to take part in this important election, and to publicize the need to participate to other displaced residents. ACORN will continue outreach to displaced voters for the May 20th run-off election.

ACORN Rebuilds New Orleans: Watch the Movie!

To order a free DVD copy of our short movie about ACORN's Home Clean-out Demonstration Program, email Eloise at communications2@acorn.org or call 504-943-0044 ext 174.

Get Involved!

With the support of donors and volunteers, ACORN will save thousands more houses in New Orleans. Donate at: www.acorn.org/donate or send **tax-deductible checks to: ACORN Institute - Hurricane Recovery and Rebuilding Fund, 739 8th Street SE, Washington, DC 20003. Volunteer: Email rebuild@acorn.org, call 504-943-0044 ext 187 or visit www.acorn.org/cleanup.**