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## 51 Reps Join Lee in Call for Fair Housing Funds

May 3, 2006

(Washington, DC) – Today, Congresswoman Barbara Lee (D-Oakland) sent a letter, signed by 51 members of Congress, calling on key members of the House Appropriations Committee to increase funding for programs to prevent housing discrimination.

“Fair housing education and enforcement play a pivotal role in increasing homeownership for people of color,” said Lee. “With increased funding for fair housing, we will be able to assist more individuals, the housing industry, and communities in forming integrated neighborhoods, free from discrimination.”

Lee’s letter to Chairman Joseph Knollenberg (R-MI) and Ranking Member John Olver (D-MA) of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Treasury, HUD and the Judiciary, encouraged them to increase funding for the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) Fair Housing Initiatives Program (FHIP) to \$50 million and to meet the President’s budget request of \$25 million for the Fair Housing Assistance Program (FHAP).

The Fair Housing Initiative Program (FHIP) and the Fair Housing Assistance Program (FHAP) fund fair housing organizations and other non-profit groups to provide vital services to their communities. Grants are used for fair housing education and enforcement programs, processing at least two-thirds of the nation’s fair housing complaints, detecting discrimination, and implementing data and information systems.

Recent investigations of real estate agents, who were designated by HUD for testing, uncovered an 87 percent rate of racial steering and a 20 percent denial rate for African-Americans and Latinos. Although homeownership rates are at an all-time high, the homeownership gap between Whites and African Americans is worse than it was in 1940. According to the National Fair Housing Alliance, the gap was 23 percent in 1940 versus 27 percent today.

“Housing choice plays a crucial role in determining access to quality schools, jobs, health care services, recreational facilities and transportation,” said Lee. “Without programs to prevent it, housing discrimination forces minority populations to bear the high costs of segregation.”

###

May 3, 2006

The Honorable Joe Knollenberg  
Chairman  
Subcommittee for Transportation, Treasury, HUD and the Judiciary  
Committee on Appropriations  
2358 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John Olver  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee for Transportation, Treasury, HUD and the Judiciary  
Committee on Appropriations  
1016 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Knollenberg and Ranking Member Olver:

As you prepare the Fiscal Year (FY) 2007 Transportation, Treasury, HUD and the Judiciary

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appropriations bill, we write to request you increase the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Fair Housing Initiatives Program (FHIP) to \$50 million for the nationwide fight against housing discrimination. We also request that you provide at least \$25 million for the Fair Housing Assistance Program (FHAP).

Despite the passage of the federal Fair Housing Act 38 years ago, more than 4 million fair housing violations still occur annually. Moreover, with evidence from HUD, the National Fair Housing Alliance, and others suggesting an increase in housing discrimination in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, we must ensure that enough funds are allocated to these programs.

The Fair Housing Initiative Program (FHIP) funds fair housing organizations and other non-profit groups to provide vital services to their communities. Grants are used for education and enforcement programs and range from \$22,000 to \$275,000. Private fair housing organizations process at least two-thirds of the nation's fair housing complaints—16,789 of the 26,092 complaints processed in 2005, and they are essential to detecting discrimination and enforcing the Fair Housing Act.

The President has proposed level funding of \$20 million for FY 2007; however this proposal includes over \$1.2 million for set-asides for other programs. Our request for a funding level of \$50 million for FHIP ensures private fair housing organizations have the resources to combat housing discrimination. Funding a \$50 million level could provide 100 housing organizations for both necessary education and enforcement efforts, an issue that has been a problem since the mid-1990s, primarily due to lack of funds. Furthermore, it could allow for the creation of additional fair housing groups, hurricane-related fair housing activities, and a national media campaign, which has not been funded for two years despite a legislative requirement to do so.

The Fair Housing Assistance Program (FHAP) funds fair housing grants annually on a non-competitive basis to substantially equivalent state and local fair housing enforcement agencies. Eligible activities include complaint processing, training, and implementation of data and information systems. The President's FY 2007 budget proposes \$25 million for FHAP, the same amount we are requesting. While we recognize the budget constraints the Committee is under, we urge the Committee to provide at least the requested \$25 million in FY 2007.

Fair housing education and enforcement play a pivotal role in increasing homeownership for people of color. Recent investigations of real estate agents, who were designated by HUD for testing, uncovered an 87 percent rate of racial steering and a 20 percent denial rate for African-Americans and Latinos. Discrimination has a significant impact on a community's tax base and without the benefits of homeownership and integrated neighborhoods minority populations bear the high costs of segregation. Although homeownership rates are at an all-time high, the homeownership gap between Whites and Blacks is worse than it was in 1940. Twenty-three percent in 1940 versus 27 percent today confirms these programs need more resources and funding.

Housing discrimination and segregation breed inequality. According to 2000 Census data, many parts of our nation are even more segregated than they were 20 years ago. Housing choice plays a crucial role in determining one's ability to access critical societal and economic functions: quality schools, jobs, health care services, recreational facilities and transportation. With increased funding, fair housing groups will be able to assist more individuals, the housing industry, and communities in forming integrated neighborhoods, free from discrimination.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Barbara Lee Al Green  
Member of Congress Member of Congress

Chaka Fattah Barney Frank  
Member of Congress Member of Congress

Tammy Baldwin Jim McDermott  
Member of Congress Member of Congress

Dale Kildee Luis Gutierrez  
Member of Congress Member of Congress

Lloyd Doggett Raul Grijalva  
Member of Congress Member of Congress

Bennie Thompson Joseph Crowley  
Member of Congress Member of Congress

Emanuel Cleaver Dennis Kucinich  
Member of Congress Member of Congress

Robert Wexler James McGovern  
Member of Congress Member of Congress

Melvin L. Watt Michael Capuano  
Memb

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## Contact Congresswoman Lee

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