

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 19, 2010

CONTACT: Craig Bailey
(802) 652-3463
cbailey@vhfa.org

RECORD ATTENDANCE AT YESTERDAY'S VERMONT STATEWIDE HOUSING CONFERENCE

BURLINGTON—A record number 480 people attended yesterday's Vermont Statewide Housing Conference held at the Hilton in Burlington. The previous record for the biennial event was nearly 450 in 2006.

“This year's huge attendance is partly due to an increasing awareness of the importance of housing, a result of the mortgage crisis that brought the topic to the top of the news over the last year,” says VHFA Policy & Planning Manager **Maura Collins**, chief organizer of the conference.



“Meeting the housing needs of Vermonters from all walks of life continues to be a challenge that has no single solution,” according to VHFA Executive Director **Sarah Carpenter**, “but coming together to share ideas face-to-face like this is vital to energizing Vermont's housing professionals to continue working toward solutions.”

The morning's keynote speaker, U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) **Sec. Shaun Donovan** (pictured), was also a strong draw. Donovan is the highest-ranking housing official to ever attend the conference. His appearance was secured with help from **Sen. Bernie Sanders** who introduced him via a live Web video stream.

“I've had the opportunity see rural America up close — in Montana, Alaska, North and South Dakota, Maine, and here in Vermont. There I've seen how different communities have very different needs — and face vastly different challenges,” Donovan told a packed room at the Hilton.

“Early next month HUD will be making funds available for our \$25 million Rural Innovation Fund. The new fund will update and improve the Rural Housing and Economic Development program by supporting larger-scale innovative approaches to addressing unique rural issues. ... Because when it comes to strengthening rural communities — when it comes to building vibrant, sustainable communities of opportunity and choice for all Americans — you know one size doesn’t fit all. And it’s long past time the Federal government understood that as well,” he added.

Donovan praised Vermont for its work on the problem of homelessness: “Vermont, of course, has been a leader in the fight to prevent and end homelessness — using (Neighborhood Stabilization Program) NSP dollars to help house homeless families and more than doubling the use of HUD homeless funds for permanent housing in the last five years.”

A complete transcript of Sec. Donovan’s remarks is available online:
www.vhfa.org/conference/donovan_transcript.php

The daylong event included 20 workshops covering a wide variety of topics: the economy, rental housing safety codes, senior housing, energy efficiency, state and federal policy and more.

The state’s network of NeighborWorks HomeOwnership Centers of Vermont received the 2010 Housing Hero award during the program’s noontime session.

Photos from the event are available at www.vhfa.org/conference.

The next Vermont Statewide Housing Conference will be held in November 2012.

- 30 -

Photo: shaun_donovan.jpg

Caption: HUD Sec. Shaun Donovan addresses the Vermont Statewide Housing Conference.

Photo: Craig Bailey.