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## **NATIONAL HOUSING FINANCE EXPERTS KICK OFF VERMONT'S STATEWIDE HOUSING CONFERENCE**



**BURLINGTON**—A packed room of about 430 people gathered this morning at the Burlington Hilton to hear Governor Shumlin's opening address and the plenary session of the biennial Statewide Vermont Housing Conference.

Shumlin recounted the challenges the state has overcome since Tropical Storm Irene caused the most devastation Vermont communities have ever experienced. Equipping our neighborhoods for the "climate change storms" of the future and rebuilding

more durably is an absolute requirement, he explained.

He also congratulated the housing agency players in the audience, describing them as "best housing coalition partnership in America," in terms of developing and preserving the state's affordable housing stock and contributing to the state's economic health. "We can't grow jobs without affordable housing," Shumlin acknowledged.

The governor also promised to "put shelters out of business" by continuing to work toward ending homelessness in Vermont.

According to the plenary panel, spending caps and sequestration scheduled for the end of the calendar year will put federal funding at risk of significant decreases. Garth Rieman of the National Council of State Housing Agencies explained that an across the board 8% cut is scheduled, on top of the 6%, \$2.5 billion, decline in HUD funding that had already taken place since 2010.

Housing and community development programs are taking a disproportionate share of the cuts, Rieman explained. Only 2 percent of the federal spending in FY 2011 was for housing and community development programs, he continued.

The remainder of this day-long conference features **Vermont's Housing Hero** awards and an exciting keynote speaker whose achievements in housing research and federal policy-making are widely acclaimed—**Dr. Xavier de Souza Briggs**. The Housing Hero awards will go to Governor Madeleine Kunin for her commitment as Vermont's chief executive to affordable housing when federal support declined during the 1980s and to Shaun Gilpin and the Vermont Mobile Home Program for tireless coordination and work with mobile home residents in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Irene.

Conference attendees will also participate in 17 different workshops on topics ranging from financing green energy in homes to developing small ("cottage home") neighborhoods. A final networking reception will feature a book-signing by Kunin.

Attendees range from Realtors, legislators, and bankers to advocates and residents.

The conference is put on every other year and organized by VHFA. It is a result of planning and partnership between several organizations: Housing Vermont, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development Service, Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, Vermont's Department of Economic, Housing and Community Development, Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition, Vermont Mortgage Bankers Association, and VHFA.

Additional photos from the event will be available at [www.vhfa.org/conference](http://www.vhfa.org/conference).

The next Vermont Statewide Housing Conference will be held in November 2014.