

## Opinion

### Editorial

# HUD Steps Up in Texas

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Washington too often looks the other way as state governments rob low-income victims of their fair share of federal disaster aid. The Department of Housing and Urban Development did the right thing recently in forcing Texas to revise a \$3 billion spending plan for aid provided in the wake of the 2008 hurricanes Ike and Dolly.

The storms ravaged the coastal and near-coastal counties, especially Harris, Orange and Galveston. They destroyed thousands of homes, including a large number owned by poor families that didn't have the money to rebuild. Instead of directing the aid to the most-damaged regions and the people with the fewest resources, the Texas plan spread it across the state and gave local planning agencies near carte blanche on how to spend it.

Two prominent fair housing groups, Texas Appleseed and the Texas Low Income Housing Information Service, filed a complaint with HUD charging that the plan did not adhere to the most basic condition of federal disaster aid, which requires that half of the money be used to benefit low- and moderate-income people. They also argued that it would violate federal civil rights and fair housing laws.

After the HUD secretary, Shaun Donovan, took the extraordinary but justified step of rejecting the initial proposal, the state negotiated an agreement with the advocates. The new plan will ensure that 55 percent of the money will be spent to help low- and moderate-income families. More than half the fund will be spent on rebuilding homes, with a fair share allocated to the poorest residents.

The state will rebuild all of the desperately needed public housing units that were destroyed in Galveston. Local opposition groups had pressured the city not to rebuild. As part of the agreement, Texas will also create new programs to help low-income and minority residents find housing in less-segregated or storm-vulnerable areas.

Thanks to tough bargaining by Secretary Donovan, hundreds of millions of dollars will be spent as Congress intended and fairness requires: helping to rebuild devastated communities and helping the most vulnerable residents rebuild their lives.

