



Statement by Rev. Dr. Willie Gable, Jr.

Executive Vice Chairman, National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc
Speaking on behalf of the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging

Good Morning. I am Rev. Dr. Willie Gable, Jr., executive vice chairman of National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc, and I am here representing the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging, an association whose members serve two million people each day through mission-driven, not-for-profit organizations. Each day, not-for-profit affordable housing sponsors in over 6,000 senior housing facilities strive to provide the services older adults need to preserve dignity, independence and self-respect. As a sponsor who works for 40,000 of these individuals, I know the proposed amendment to HR 1461 would limit our ability to meet this goal.

Traditionally, my organization and others like it use our resources to meet our residents' social, physical and spiritual needs. This includes sponsoring activities that support civic engagement. All of these activities are protected and permissible under federal law for not-for-profit organizations. To change HR 1461 as proposed is to take away this right from us and this opportunity from our current and future residents. I would call this amendment the "Non-Voting Rights Amendment of 2005."

Now more than ever, America's seniors need the housing and services that not-for-profit organizations provide to help them feel safe. In the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, hundreds of those 40,000 individuals I work for were discouraged and displaced. Some suffered from sickness and starvation. Others could not be found for days. It was during this time that NBC relied on other not-for-profit organizations for help. Their voluntary and monetary support was invaluable and irreplaceable, and it should not be discriminated against by a Congress and an administration that once promoted it.

The proposed Affordable Housing Fund offers a new and much-needed private revenue stream that groups like the National Baptist Convention could use to restore and rebuild affordable senior housing in the Gulf States. It could also help other housing sponsors meet the growing need for affordable senior housing. However, the decision to bar not-for-profit organizations from accessing the fund also bars older adults from receiving the quality of life that they deserve. To me, this amendment exemplifies how partisanship and politics can stand in the way of recovery and restoration.

In closing, I urge the same members of Congress who represent America's older adults not to support an amendment that will limit not-for-profit organizations' ability to provide their constituents with services they need, when they need them, in a place they can call home.