

Reinvestment WORKS

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HUD Secretary Julián Castro delivers his keynote address

2015 NCRC Annual Conference Draws Over 750 Participants

From March 25-28, NCRC held its largest annual conference yet, “Creating a Just Economy,” with over 750 attendees, over 40 workshops, plenaries, and trainings, and an exciting slate of keynote speakers. Converging in Washington, DC for the conference, community advocates from across the country attended trainings and workshops, shared experiences and best practices and built connections to help advance social and economic justice.

“The passion and commitment to a just economy displayed by our conference participants is truly inspiring,” said NCRC’s President and CEO John Taylor. “Our unifying purpose at the conference is to create vibrant, healthy neighborhoods and communities, and an economic system in which everyone has a fair shot to prosper. Together, we work to ensure that our economy and the policies and practices that surround it foster fairness and allow opportunity for all.”

Take a look inside for more on the conference, including articles, photos, and links to videos of the keynote addresses.

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Top HUD Officials Address Fair Housing and Homeownership, Acknowledge NCRC's Work

By Kendrick Baker

NCRC's 2015 Annual Conference featured keynote addresses from two top officials from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Secretary Julián Castro and



Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity Gustavo Velasquez. Both spoke about the value of homeownership and recognized NCRC's efforts to promote it.

In his address on the first day of the conference, Secretary Julián Castro called NCRC a "powerful voice for the overlooked and the underserved." He also noted NCRC's work in the \$16.6 million Midland State Bank settlement late last year and NCRC's

HUD Assistant Secretary Gustavo Velasquez speaks at the NCRC Awards Dinner

work providing housing counseling to millions of families. Castro also recognized the importance of HUD's partnerships with NCRC members and other community groups, stating "HUD will be by your side, for as long as it takes to get that job done."

At Friday night's NCRC Awards Dinner, Assistant Secretary Velasquez gave a pragmatic address that complemented Castro's by focusing on upcoming battles related to fair housing. Speaking on the pending Supreme Court decision regarding disparate impact, Velasquez stressed the importance of fair housing testing as integral to the continued fight for improving access to housing for all Americans. He acknowledged NCRC's work in that fight, and on other housing matters, saying, "NCRC is one of those groups on the right side of issues. As long as I am Assistant Secretary of HUD, I am committed to be appreciative, thankful, and supportive of all the work that NCRC and all of its members do across the country."

Both Castro and Velasquez emphasized that homeownership is still the cornerstone of the American dream, and reminded the conference that strong, universal access to fiscal tools means strong economic benefits for the whole economy. Focusing on the benefits of homeownership, Castro said "the opportunity of homeownership

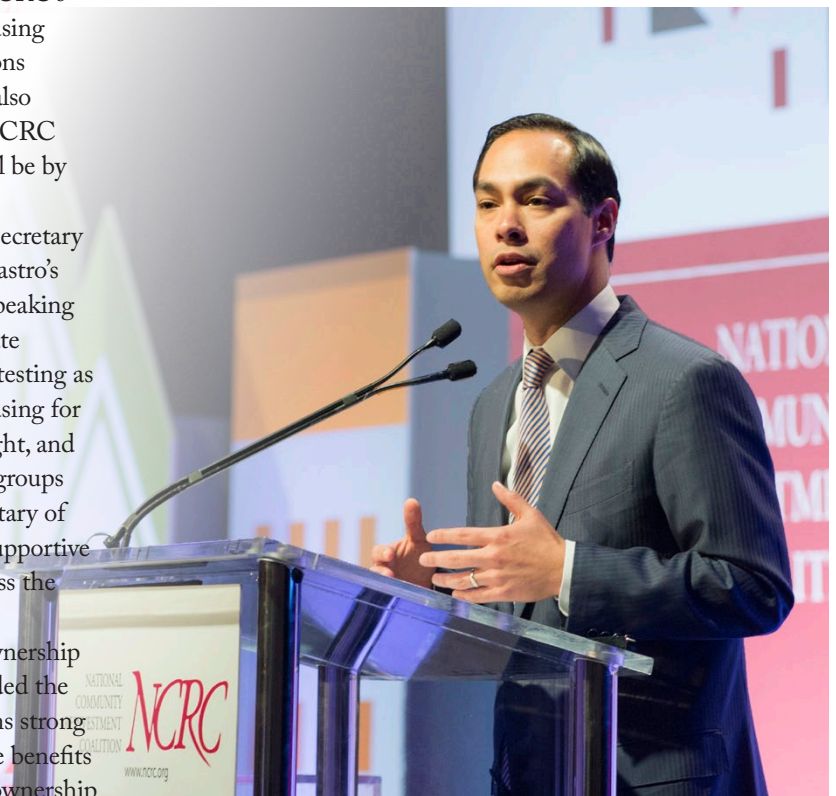
is so powerful. It's a source of pride. It's a source of wealth creation. It strengthens communities, and contributes to the forward progress of our entire nation." He also pointed to the interconnected

nature of American prosperity in his speech: "our futures are linked, and when our neighbors and communities do well, we all do well."

They also made it clear that there was still much work to be done, but that together we can create opportunities to move forward. Castro noted that the "expansion of opportunity is only possible when folks are being treated fairly in the lending process.... That's not always the case, even in the year 2015." He gave a strong message of solidarity, noting the need to "work together to empower folks with the tools they need to thrive, to achieve upward mobility for themselves and for their families, and...make the next chapter in our American story its greatest yet."

"Just because folks are of modest means doesn't mean that they have modest dreams."

— HUD Secretary Julián Castro



HUD Secretary Julián Castro delivers a keynote address on the first day of the conference

Keynote Addresses Call for Expansion of Coalitions for Economic Justice

The third day of the annual conference featured a complementary pair of energetic speeches calling on attendees to double-down on efforts to build a broad, grassroots movement for social and economic justice. Rev. Dr. William Barber II, President of the North Carolina NAACP, and John Taylor, President and CEO of NCRC, bookended the day with calls to foster coalitions within communities and counter the influence corporate interests have gained in American political life.

Rev. Barber provided both a literal and figurative [wake-up call](#) in his morning speech. He decried the recent erosions to the Voting Rights Act, and citing the serious challenges facing voting rights, he called on attendees to support the confirmation of Loretta Lynch as U.S. Attorney General. Barber said of Ms. Lynch, "[for] all of the federal laws and protections that so many of you have fought for, her confirmation is key."

Taylor's speech focused on the way "big corpora" (meaning big

corporations) has undertaken a sustained effort to get people to vote against their own interests, and he emphasized the need for starting conversations anew. He began his speech with the history of the last 40 years of "big corpora" involvement in politics, and described the enormous resources and planning that went into tilting politics in favor of large corporations. While the vast majority of people believe in fundamental fairness, he said, corporations have advanced their political agenda by linking their messages to values, with the frequent result of people voting against the interests of their communities. To fight this orchestrated campaign, said Taylor, we need our own, going "door-to-door, neighbor-to-neighbor...straight down the line, having these conversations."

Both speakers agreed on the need to bring together those who agree on fairness and equal opportunity in order to show our strength. "Justice belongs to everyone," said Taylor. We can only reclaim our democracy, he said, "through a patient, collaborative, organized, and committed campaign that builds bridges

Rev. Dr. William Barber II calls for a campaign to defend civil rights.

NCRC President and CEO John Taylor talks about the use of language in political organizing.

across all cultures, class, and race." Citing the success of the Civil Rights Movement, Barber also emphasized the need for a mass movement like the one we had 50 years ago. He asserted that the place to start is protecting voting rights from further assault: "You must join the fight for a real fix to the Voting Rights Act if you are truly concerned about reinvestment in this country and the policies that are passed," he said.

The speeches expressed the conference's goal of equipping participants with the skills, knowledge, and connections to take back to their communities and organize for a just economy. Both speakers galvanized the audience to develop a strategic and comprehensive campaign to expand our country's political and economic dialogues.



Comptroller Curry Addresses Age-Friendly Banking in Conference Remarks

By Ryan Conley

In his keynote address during the Friday luncheon at the 2015 NCRC Annual Conference, Comptroller of the Currency Thomas Curry focused on Age-Friendly Banking and emphasized the need to strengthen the role banks play in protecting the financial assets of older adults. In addition, several sessions and workshops at the conference focused on the issue of older adult economic security, including a National Neighbors Silver partners meeting, and a second age-friendly banking convening.

In his speech, Curry commended NCRC “for its focus on older Americans with its National Neighbors Silver program and age-friendly banking campaign,” (an innovative approach for offering financial products, services, and protections designed to improve the financial well-being of economically vulnerable older adults). He also mentioned NCRC’s white paper “[A New Dawn: Age-Friendly Banking](#).” “In addressing the problem of elder financial abuse and exploitation, banks, regulators, and organizations like the NCRC all have an important role to play,” said Curry. “...NCRC is doing its part to protect this vulnerable segment of our population.”

Several of Curry’s recommendations for the steps banks can take to ensure financial protection and education for older adults mirrored proposals put forward by NCRC in a recent white paper, “[Empowering Financial Service Providers to Help](#).” In particular, he stressed the use of Suspicious Activity Reports (SARs) to monitor potential instances of older adult financial abuse. He also mentioned the importance of educating bank workers who interact directly with older adults to recognize and report signs of financial fraud.

During his remarks, Curry acknowledged the conference’s workshops and sessions promoting awareness of older adult financial issues. This year, NCRC held several workshops on these topics, as well as an NNS partners meeting on aging in community, and an age-friendly banking convening to generate new ideas for advancing age-friendly banking. On the first day of the conference, NNS partners gathered to discuss the latest updates in aging in community. Approximately 40 attendees representing bankers, local governments, community groups, and others strategized about new aging in community initiatives and resources. Many of the attendees were able to share examples of products, strategies, and tools, and present solutions to aging in community issues they’ve addressed, such as healthcare coordination and falling behind in taxes and bills. Similar discussions also took place in a later workshop on community development and aging in community; this workshop also looked to involve community development corporations and community

development financial institutions in the financial aspects of aging in community.

At the 2014 annual conference, NCRC hosted its first age-friendly banking convening, an interactive brainstorm to develop age-friendly priorities and strategies. The fruitful conversation helped drive the development of age-friendly banking projects; research, data, and marketing, in particular, emerged as issues to focus on in the future. At this year’s conference, the agenda of the second age-friendly banking convening was influenced in part by two age-friendly banking Innovation Labs hosted by NCRC and NNS earlier in the year. At the convening, participants created lists of age-friendly products and services, then representatives of various age-friendly banking stakeholders chose which were a priority for them. This led to roundtable discussions about the challenges and opportunities the ideas present, followed by strategies for implementing them.

As NNS and its partners undertake several projects in the coming months to promote age-friendly banking education for both bank workers and older adults (see “[NCRC’s National Neighbors Silver Takes the Lead on Older Adult Financial Issues](#)” *Reinvestment Works*, Winter 2015), the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency’s interest in these issues, and the ideas and collaborations coming out of the conference, will provide a major boost to efforts to build collaborations between financial services providers, law enforcement, caregivers, family members, and older adults to prevent elder financial fraud and abuse.

For information about joining NNS’s aging in community working group, please contact Bob Zdenek, Director, NNS, at rzdenek@ncrc.org or Karen Kali, Trainer, NNS, at kkali@ncrc.org. To watch Comptroller Curry’s keynote address, click [here](#).



Comptroller of the Currency Thomas Curry discusses approaches to age-friendly banking

In Q&A Session, Comptroller Curry Pressed on CRA

After his keynote address at the 2015 NCRC Annual Conference's Friday luncheon, Comptroller of the Currency Thomas Curry took several questions from the audience, ranging from Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) expansion to regulatory capture.

The first question asked was whether Curry supported expanding CRA assessment areas to locations where banks may not have branches, but where they do a significant amount of lending and other business. NCRC President and CEO John Taylor broadened the question, also asking about the status of CRA reform. Curry noted that changes in banking technology are “a

fundamental issue facing the CRA,” but took the position that “addressing that would require legislative action as opposed to strictly regulatory intervention” (NCRC maintains that regulators do have the power to make many improvements to the regulation). While CRA is “hardwired for a geographical tie-in,” said Curry, he recognized that banking agencies and organizations like NCRC see this as an important issue that needs to be addressed.

Regarding CRA bank exams, Curry was asked if he would consider adding a fifth grade, “Low Satisfactory,” to distinguish between banks that are truly fulfilling their CRA obligations and those that are barely passing the exam. Curry argued that the goal of the grade is to give

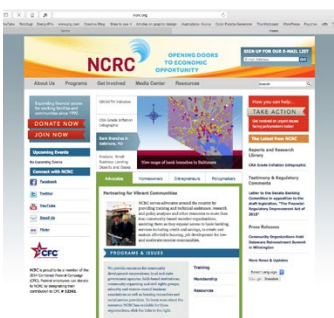
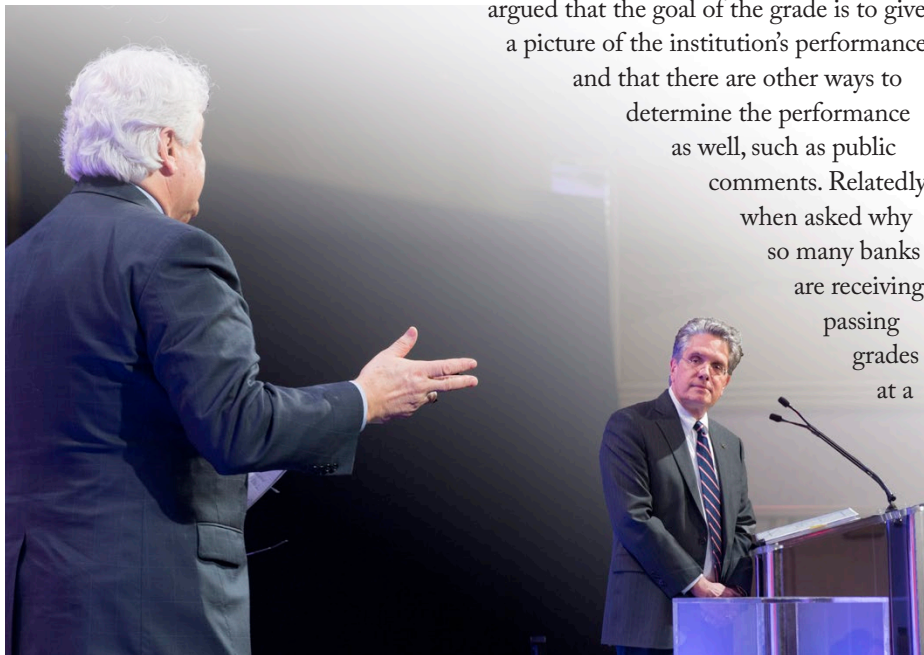
time when branch closings in low- and moderate-income are picking up, Curry said that the closings are something the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC) watches but doesn't have control over. But, holding up his cell phone, he expressed his opinion that mobile technology is not the wave of the future in banking.

Another question addressed the issue of regulatory capture, for which the Federal Reserve has recently come under fire. Curry said it is “important for the OCC to prevent even the appearance of corruption,” and that they have taken several steps to improve the OCC's organizational structure and policies to address this. He concluded by saying that he had spent his 30-year career making sure regulators are independent, and that he will continue this goal.

Finally, Curry was asked to respond to a question with a yes or no answer: does he support expanding CRA to credit unions? He offered a lighthearted reply, stating that “Bank Commissioner Thomas Curry did.”

You can read more about Comptroller Curry's full keynote address in “Comptroller Curry Addresses Age-Friendly Banking in Conference Remarks” in this issue of *Reinvestment Works*. To watch the keynote address, click [here](#). The Q&A session begins at 21:21.

Comptroller of the Currency Thomas Curry answers audience questions about CRA, bank exams, and more.



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Community Advocates Descend on Capitol Hill as Part of 2015 NCRC Annual Conference

By Ryan Conley

As part of the 2015 NCRC Annual Conference, hundreds of community groups visited Capitol Hill to present members of Congress with their federal policy priorities for the coming year. NCRC holds the annual Hill Day visits to allow conference participants the opportunity to advocate to legislators in person to promote safe access to capital, credit, and basic banking services in their communities. Hundreds of NCRC members from 27 states visited members of Congress or their staff, and many had visits with multiple legislators over the course of the morning.

“These visits open, or in many cases continue, a dialogue between community advocates and their representatives in Congress,” said NCRC’s President and CEO John Taylor. “Our conference participants are some of the leading advocates for their communities, and Hill Day is an important occasion to make legislators aware of the issues that matter to those they represent.”

After the meetings, participants gathered for a luncheon at the Hart Senate Office Building to discuss the outcomes of the morning’s meetings and hear how members of Congress plan to address their concerns. Members, grouped by state, expressed a generally positive response from those they met with and were optimistic that their concerns had been heard.

This year, the luncheon featured keynote addresses from Senator Sherrod Brown of Ohio and Representatives Maxine Waters and Mark Takano of California. Senator Brown, who attended NCRC’s Ohio Reinvestment Summit in September (see “[Ohio Reinvestment Summit Draws Hundreds of Local Advocates](#),” *Reinvestment Works*, Summer 2014), spoke about

the legacy of the Civil Rights Movement and how we must draw inspiration from it in our work. Representative Waters, an attendee of previous annual conferences, emphasized the importance of organizing to create fair access to capital and affordable housing. Representative Takano made note of the work NCRC and its members do to ensure that the fundamentals are available to those trying to get ahead.

The energy and collective advocacy of Hill Day participants can be a strong factor in motivating members of Congress to act on social and economic justice issues. By meeting with their legislators face-to-face, members show the strength of their commitment and dedication to a just economy. As an opportunity for members to see how the work they do in their communities affects policy on the federal level, Hill Day has always been an energizing event, and this year was no exception.



Rep. Maxine Waters of California energizes Hill Day participants.

NCRC Honors 2015 National Achievement Award Winners at Annual Conference

“The annual NCRC Awards Dinner is a wonderful opportunity to recognize some of the leaders in our field and their excellent work,” said NCRC President and CEO John Taylor. “We are proud to honor this year’s winners for their outstanding achievements in community reinvestment and social and economic justice.”

The recipients of the 2015 National Achievement Awards are:



CASA of Oregon, (below) for the Representative James Leach Award

The Representative James Leach Award recognizes the rural non-profit organization that best promotes fair and equal access to credit and capital and/or contributes the most in its community toward promoting wealth building in traditionally underserved populations.

St. Louis Equal Housing and Community Reinvestment Alliance (SLEHCRA), (above) for the National Community Reinvestment Award

The National Community Reinvestment Award recognizes the individual or organization that through their work over the past year has best exemplified the ideals and values of the community reinvestment movement and economic justice.



Josh Silver, (left) Development Manager for Manna, Inc., for the Senator William Proxmire Award

The Senator William Proxmire Award recognizes the individual whose life’s work exemplifies the spirit and work of Senator Proxmire’s contributions to economic mobility. Senator Proxmire was the author and lead sponsor of the Community Reinvestment Act.



To watch SLEHCRA and CASA of Oregon’s award presentations and acceptance speeches, click [here](#).

To watch Josh Silver’s award presentation and acceptance speech and Senator Warren’s video address, click [here](#).

To watch Assistant Secretary Velasquez’s speech, click [here](#).

NCRC Conference Packed With Workshops, Speakers, and More



Rep. Mark Takano of California takes audience questions at Congressional Luncheon



Sen. Sherrod Brown of Ohio discusses the legacy of the Civil Rights Movement at Hill Day



Maria Contreras-Sweet, Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration, delivers a keynote address at the Welcome Luncheon. [Click here to watch her speech.](#)

Awards Dinner Features Inspiring Remarks, Celebration of Accomplishments

On the final evening of the annual conference, NCRC presented its National Achievement Awards and honored leaders in expanding fair access to financial services. The awards ceremony featured keynote remarks from Gustavo F. Velasquez, Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and John Taylor, NCRC's President and CEO. The Master of Ceremonies was Robert Dickerson, Jr., Chair of NCRC's Board of Directors and Executive Director of the Birmingham Business Resource Center. The event also featured a video message from Senator Elizabeth Warren.

"The annual NCRC Awards Dinner is a wonderful opportunity to recognize some of the leaders in our field and their excellent work,"

— John Taylor, NCRC President and CEO



Awards Dinner attendees watch a video message from Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts.



NCRC Board Chairperson Robert Dickerson, Jr.



NCRC Staff at the 2015 Annual Conference



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Reinvestment WORKS

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Not a member yet? Join today!

NCRC's members are community organizations across the country dedicated to promoting fair and equal access to credit, capital and banking services for all communities and populations.

Membership benefits include:

- Data analyses that help members understand bank investment patterns in their communities,
- Access to the members-only listserv,
- Subscriptions to Shelterforce Magazine and GrantStation, a weekly fundraising newsletter,
- Discounted rates for NCRC's Annual Conference, and
- Assistance engaging with federal officials.

Membership Eligibility:

Non-profit organizations and local and state governments/government agencies are eligible for membership.

How to Become a Member:

Becoming a member is easy!
Visit us online at www.ncrc.org, call our Membership Department at 202.628.8866, or email membership@ncrc.org.

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