

## Mahoney Presents Amendment to save Main Street Grant Program

Congressman Tim Mahoney

Floor Statement on H.R. 3524

January 17, 2008

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Mr. Chairman, I rise today to offer the amendment that will preserve the HOPE VI Main Street Grant program.

This program, important to rural communities with very small populations, was created with the passage of the American Dream Act in 2003. Since its inception, the program has helped a small number of rural communities develop affordable housing units in conjunction with larger revitalization efforts.

The creation of the HOPE VI Main Street Grant program in 2003 was important to rural communities, because it allows rural communities to compete with larger urban areas for a small percentage of HOPE VI dollars. Mr. Chairman, for those not familiar with the program, the HOPE VI Main Street grants are funded through a 5 percent set-aside in the HOPE VI annual appropriations, and each award is capped at \$1 million.

As I noted, this program is extremely important to rural communities, such as Moore Haven, Florida. Located on the banks of the Caloosahatchee River in Glades County, in one of the most rural areas of South Florida, Moore Haven is one of the oldest cities in South Florida. This beautiful old sleepy Florida town is home to one doctor, Dr. Geek, and one restaurant. It is one of the few places left in Florida where the families have lived there for generations and everyone knows their neighbor. Unfortunately, it is also one of the poorest areas in the State. The population of the City is approximately 1,900 and the annual tax revenue for all of Glades County is \$6 million. The people of Moore Haven have the desire to revitalize their historic downtown area, but, they lack the financial resources.

Guided by the vision and leadership of Tracy Whirls, the Executive Director of the Glades County Economic Development Council, Moore Haven applied for a HOPE VI Main Street grant last year. The city had hoped to use the money to purchase three historic- but dilapidated and vacant - buildings with the intention of attracting businesses to the first floors and 12 affordable housing units on the upper levels. Plans for the first floors included opening Moore Haven's only pharmacy and furniture store.

I regret, Mr. Speaker, that Moore Haven was not successful in its attempt to secure the grant. The good news is that they are game and they're going to apply for it again this year, but I believe that it is imperative that as we continue to give Moore Haven and small rural cities like Moore Haven across this great nation this opportunity.

Mr. Chairman, in closing I would like to leave you with the words of Larry Luckey, the Glades County Property Appraiser: "If we are unable to save these historic commercial building, the downtown historic district will cease to exist. I am saddened at the thought that we may well become a city with no history."

I would ask for the support of my colleagues to preserve the HOPE VI Main Street Grant Program, and the economy and history of small towns throughout America, including Moore Haven. In addition, with the passage of my amendment, we will ensure that rural communities continue to have access to the affordable housing benefits provided by the HOPE VI program.

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