

## HUD Workforce Turmoil Grows

Open verbal warfare has erupted between the new HUD executive hierarchy -- what there is of it at this point -- and the department's rank and file. The two unions representing most of HUD's workers are caught in the middle with scant recourse under an administration that places little stock in labor unions.

Nine months into the Trump administration, HUD is still without its key leaders, including deputy secretary designate Pamela Patenaude whose nomination has been bottled up in Senate politics since it was given a nod by the Senate Banking Committee in mid-June.

That lack of direction and the absence of other key political appointees to assistant secretary positions -- both nominated and not yet acted on or awaiting presidential nomination -- largely leaves one person to deal with the dilemma.

Unions accuse HUD Chief Operating Officer David Eagles of aloofness, largely ignoring their interests. Eagles, who has been crafting a plan to move HUD back into its traditional role of public housing and urban development, is swamped with comments from employees delivered through an electronic suggestion box, leaving little time to devote to union grievances. Eagles says his basic marching orders from the White House have been to restructure, reform and reorganize HUD.

At the same time, Secretary Ben Carson shows little concern for rank and file problems or the day-to-day administration of the department, leaving the workforce grumbling over the leadership gap.

Meanwhile, HUD's workforce, down from its 2010 high of 8,500 workers to its current 7,400 tenured employees, fears more reassignments and buyout offers in a department that faces further downsizing under the Trump administration's proposed \$7 billion in budget cuts, about 15% of its total budget.

Adding to the employee friction is the divide between veteran employees and those brought in late in the Obama administration -- HUD went on a spree in early 2015 to hire at least 1,000 new employees, some of who were hired as political appointees and then burrowed into the civil service ranks in permanent positions.

HUD sources tell *HAL* the real picture of HUD's ability to handle its responsibilities will emerge as the department attempts to tackle the hurricane emergencies with the leadership and resources now at hand.

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