

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

January 23, 2012

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. President,

We are writing to urge you to work with us to address the severe and growing housing foreclosure, abandonment, and vacancy crisis that are eroding communities throughout the nation. While every corner of the United States has suffered harm from this crisis, weak housing market areas in Ohio and Michigan have been devastated by slow population growth and cannot sustain the oversupply of vacant properties.

Without market demand for these old homes, tens of thousands sit empty and decaying. Estimates show that in addition to being abandoned and vacant, over 70,000 homes in Ohio are in such a state of disrepair as to require demolition.

Vacant and abandoned homes not only rob neighboring homes of their value, but they become dangerous centers of crime, looting, and drug activity. As the number of abandoned homes increases, adjacent property owners watch their own homes become essentially worthless, and are increasingly likely to abandon their homes as well. Tax revenues plummet, private investment halts, and vacancies multiply, compounding the adverse impact on our communities. In southwest Ohio's Montgomery County alone, annual property tax collections have dropped by \$40 million. In some areas of Ohio's Cuyahoga County, homes are now selling for as little as 8% of their appraised value. Across Ohio, and throughout the industrial Midwest, cities and municipalities face the stark prospect of receivership or even municipal bankruptcy as their property tax bases collapse under the pressures of this crisis. In addition to eroding local and state tax bases, plummeting home values are erasing the personal savings of tens of thousands, if not millions, of Americans, causing a substantial drop in consumer spending and adding to the recessive trends in the broader American economy.

We believe that now is the time to act and help stressed local governments respond to the remnants of the housing foreclosure crisis. By confronting the multi-layered crisis through demolition of abandoned housing, we will substantially strengthen the housing market and lay the foundation for a much broader economic recovery in hard hit communities.

After the successful efforts of some local governments in Ohio and Michigan to address these issues, we now know that demolishing abandoned homes can substantially preserve and increase the taxable values of surrounding homes. In Flint, Michigan, a \$3.5 million investment in the demolition of vacant and condemned homes resulted in \$109 million in preserved property values among the remaining inhabited homes.

Stressed local governments lack the ability to finance large-scale demolition projects. We must devise a federal solution to aid their efforts and promote public-private partnerships through which local municipalities, state governments, citizen stakeholders, and investors would be able to leverage their local and private funds to finance the demolition projects that preserve property values and stabilize local economies.

Mr. President, we ask that you quickly direct your Administration to work with us to facilitate a strategic and comprehensive response to the devastating consequences of the housing foreclosure and vacancy crisis. Thank you for your time and attention to this very important issue.

Sincerely,



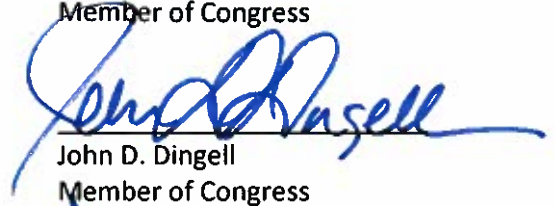
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CC: Secretary Shaun Donovan  
CC: Secretary Tim Geithner