



SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL  
ARCHDIOCESAN COUNCIL OF ST. LOUIS

## Why it is Important to Advocate for Affordable Housing (Part 1)

VOICE  
of the POOR

The economic growth for the past ten years in the United States is almost unprecedented. Private job growth and low unemployment rates are among the most favorable in nearly fifty years. God has truly blessed us! Many of us have benefited through hard work and diligence to our jobs.

Even so, not everyone has experienced the same good fortune. Regardless of our political affiliations, Catholic doctrine teaches that we have an obligation to those with less means.

Catholic bishops believe decent, safe, and affordable housing is a human right. Catholic teaching supports the right to private property but recognizes that communities and the government have an obligation to ensure the housing needs of all are met, especially the poor and vulnerable. At a time of rising homelessness and when many workers' wages are stagnant and living expenses are rising, it is important to ensure housing security.

The United States Conference of Bishops have stated the following regarding affordable housing:

*It is not our role or our expertise to describe the specific policies and programs to meet these needs. But we can suggest some directions and criteria for a renewed commitment to decent housing. We believe that the major goals for national housing policy should include the following:*

- **Preservation:** *Effective policies to help preserve, maintain, and improve what low-cost, decent housing we already have.*
- **Production:** *Creative, cost-effective, and flexible programs that will increase the supply of quality housing for low-income families, the elderly, and others in great need.*

- **Participation:** Encouraging the active and sustained involvement and empowerment of the homeless, tenants, neighborhood residents, and housing consumers. We need to build on the American traditions of homeownership, self-help, and neighborhood participation.
- **Partnership:** Ongoing support for effective and creative partnerships among nonprofit community groups, churches, private developers, government at all levels, and financial institutions to build and preserve affordable housing.
- **Affordability:** Efforts to help families obtain decent housing at costs that do not require neglect of other basic necessities.
- **Opportunity:** Stronger efforts to combat discrimination in housing against racial and ethnic minorities, women, those with handicapping conditions, and families with children.

**Conclusion:** Churches, community groups, the private sector, and state and local governments must do more to meet our common responsibilities for housing. We must recognize the homeless person as part of the human family, as part of us. However, there is no substitute for an involved, competent, and committed federal government providing resources, leadership, and direction for a broad and flexible attack on homelessness and poor housing.

The following link will take you to a fact sheet on rental assistance in Missouri provided by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. **It tells a different story than what many of us our experiencing in our lives.** How do we as Vincentians take the lead of our Bishops and work with our government officials to provide a better tomorrow for every American?

<https://apps.cbpp.org/4-3-19hous/PDF/4-3-19hous-factsheet-mo.pdf>

Please note the following statistics from the fact sheet:

- Three out of 10 low-income people in Missouri are homeless or pay over half their income for rent.
- 331,300 people in 169,600 low-income Missouri households pay more than half their income for rent.
- The median rent (including utilities) for an apartment in Missouri was \$800/month in 2017.
- On a single night in 2018, 5880 people experienced homelessness in Missouri.
- 30,650 Missouri children live in unstable housing.

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