

November 2019

Habitat for Humanity urges you to ask the presidential candidates during the November debate how they would address the significant home affordability gap communities across the country are grappling with.

More than 38 million families are paying too much for a place to call home. Rents and homeownership costs are skyrocketing, while wages are not keeping pace. Far too often, families struggling to make ends meet are forced to choose between a safe, decent place to live and other necessities like nutritious food or healthcare. This problem affects people everywhere. In cities, suburbs and rural areas alike, the stability that home should bring remains out of reach.

Earlier this year Habitat for Humanity launched a national advocacy campaign—Cost of Home—to improve home affordability for 10 million people over the next five years. To adequately address the issue, the next administration and Congress will need to identify and pass viable federal policy solutions that will fuel and sustain the growth of affordable housing. As we've begun to more actively engage elected officials at all levels of government, we've witnessed growing support for these policies. We expect to see that momentum gain even more traction in the next Congress.

As such, we believe now is the time for our presidential candidates to talk about their housing policy positions. According to a recent national public opinion poll conducted by Opportunity Starts at Home, 60% of people say housing affordability is a serious problem where they live. Eighty-three percent say elected officials are not paying enough attention to the cost of housing and the need for more affordable housing. Nearly eight in 10 people in the U.S. say the president should “take major action” to make housing more affordable for low-income families. That is why it is paramount that presidential candidates formulate their affordable housing policy positions now.

It's clear that access to affordable homes is one of the greatest challenges facing Americans today and should be at the forefront of the 2020 election. But so far, the presidential candidate debates have failed to include a question about this important issue. That needs to change. You can open the door for greater discussion on this topic by asking each candidate a question about how they plan to address the nation's need for housing affordability. We've drafted a few questions for consideration and inclusion:

- With rent and home prices at close to their highest levels in 40 years, more than 18 million U.S. households are spending half or more of their income on housing. What role do you believe the federal government should play in supporting housing affordability, and what steps would you take to ensure that all Americans have access to a safe, decent and affordable home?
- The need for more affordable homeownership opportunities is felt by Americans across the country. The United States is facing a severe affordable housing shortage, the effects of which are disproportionately borne by people of color. What role would your administration play in creating more affordable homeownership options in all communities in the United States?
- We often hear about the affordable housing problems in places like New York and California, but the facts show Americans are facing housing prices far too high across the country. Here in Georgia, nearly a fourth of all renters are spending more than half their income on housing. What is your plan to address affordable housing, not only on the coasts, but in other urban, suburban and rural areas across the nation?

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Habitat for Humanity International and below signed state and local affiliated organizations

Alabama Habitat for Humanity
Alachua Habitat for Humanity (FL)
Blue Ridge Habitat for Humanity (VA)
Blue Water Habitat for Humanity (MI)
Berthoud Habitat for Humanity (CO)
Cave Run Area Habitat for Humanity (KY)
Chatham Habitat for Humanity (NC)
Chicagoland Habitat for Humanity (IL)
Dallas Area Habitat for Humanity (TX)
Danville & Pittsylvania County Habitat for Humanity (VA)
Edisto Habitat for Humanity (SC)
Elizabeth City Habitat for Humanity (NC)
Genesee County Habitat for Humanity (MI)
Greater Cleveland Habitat for Humanity (OH)
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Greater Indianapolis Habitat for Humanity (IN)
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Greeley-Weld Habitat for Humanity (CO)
Gwinnett County Habitat for Humanity (GA)
Habitat for Humanity Buffalo (NY)
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Habitat for Humanity in Okaloosa County (FL)
Habitat for Humanity Menominee River (MI)
Habitat for Humanity Metro Maryland (MD)
Habitat for Humanity MetroWest/Greater Worcester (MA)

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Habitat for Humanity New York City (NY)
Habitat for Humanity North Carolina
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Habitat for Humanity of Craven County (NC)
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Habitat for Humanity of Frederick Co. (WV)
Habitat for Humanity of Georgia
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Habitat for Humanity Tucson (AZ)
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North St. Louis County Habitat for Humanity (MO)
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