



## **The Livable Communities Act of 2009 and 2010 (S 1619 / HR 4690)**

**Introduced.** On August 6, 2009 by Senator Dodd (D-CT), Chairman, U.S. Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee, and cosponsored by Senators Menendez (D-NJ), Merkley (D-OR), Bennet (D-CO), Akaka (D-HI) and Schumer (D-NY). On February 25, 2010 by Congressman Perlmutter (D-CO, 7), and cosponsored by Reps. Christensen (D-VI), Blumenauer (D-OR, 3), Carnahan (D-MO, 3), Carson (D-IN, 7), Cohen (D-TN, 9), Courtney (D-CT, 2), Ellison (D-MN, 5), Halvorson (D-IL, 11), Himes (D-CT, 4), Hodes (D-NH, 2), Holt (D-NJ, 12) and Larson (D-CT, 1)

**Purpose.** The Livable Communities Act's intent is to help local communities plan for and create better and more affordable places to live, work and raise families. Through comprehensive regional planning and implementation, communities will be able to cut traffic congestion; reduce greenhouse gas emissions and gasoline consumption; protect rural areas and green spaces; revitalize existing Main Streets and urban centers; and, create more affordable housing.

**Incentives To Plan For Livable Communities.** The Comprehensive Planning Grant Program will help communities develop comprehensive regional plans that incorporate transportation, housing, community and economic development and environmental needs. The Act authorizes \$400 million in competitive grant money over four years.

Grantees must demonstrate a commitment to integrated planning and implementing sustainable development. Communities may also use funds to develop goals and concrete strategies for carrying out their regional plans and to make zoning and other code changes necessary to facilitate sustainable development. Consortia of local governments working with a metropolitan planning organization, rural planning organization, or regional council may apply for these grants. Applicants must solicit public comment and agree to establish an advisory group with representatives of public-, private- and non-profit sector organizations and the public to inform their plans.

**Funding to Implement Projects within Plan.** The Challenge Grant Program will enable communities to implement cross-cutting projects according to their comprehensive regional plans (see above). With \$3.75 billion authorized for competitive grants over three years, these projects will help communities create and preserve affordable housing; support transit-oriented development; improve public transportation; create pedestrian and bicycle thoroughfares; redevelop brownfields; and, foster economic development.

**Partnering with Local Communities.** The legislation ensures that the federal government is a supportive partner for community planning and sustainable development efforts, allowing regions that apply for Livable Communities grants to receive technical assistance and giving special assistance to smaller communities that may need additional help to get started. The Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities in HUD will ensure that communities learn from each other's successes acting as a resource for best practices and technical assistance.

**Interagency Council on Sustainable Communities.** By bringing together the HUD, the DOT, the EPA, and other federal agencies, the Interagency Council on Sustainable Communities will coordinate federal sustainable development policies; coordinate federal sustainability research; coordinate with HUD to implement Livable Communities grants; identify barriers to sustainable development; and promote coordination of transportation, housing, community development, energy, and environmental policies.

**Status:**

**S 1619** has been referred to the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee for review.

**HR 4690** has been referred to the following House committees for review – Financial Services; Transportation & Infrastructure; and, Energy and Commerce.