

Seniors, Housing, and Health: Financial Challenges of Low-Income Older Americans

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Speaker Biographies



Linda Elam directs the Office of Disability, Aging and Long-Term Care Policy at the US Department of Health and Human Services. Her office leads department policies that support the independence, health, and productivity of elderly individuals and people with disabilities; it also supports the National Advisory Council on Alzheimer's Research, Care and Services.

Elam is a former senior deputy director and state Medicaid director at the District of Columbia's Department of Health Care Finance, where she implemented programmatic changes related to the Affordable Care Act. In addition, she spearheaded Medicaid reform activities designed to improve the quality of benefits delivered to eligible residents.

Before she began government service, Elam was a principal policy analyst with the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. She received her BS in zoology with honors from Howard University, her MPH in health policy and administration from the University of California, Berkeley, and her PhD in health policy and management from the Bloomberg School of Public Health at the Johns Hopkins University.



Judy Feder is an Institute fellow in the Health Policy Center at the Urban Institute and is a professor of public policy at the McCourt School of Public Policy at Georgetown University, where she was dean from 1999 to 2008. A nationally recognized leader in health policy, she has made her mark on the nation's health insurance system through both scholarship and public service. Feder's health policy research began at the Brookings Institution and continued at Urban and at Georgetown University. In the late 1980s, she moved from policy research to policy leadership, promoting effective health reform as staff director of the congressional Pepper Commission. She was principal deputy assistant secretary for planning and evaluation at the Department of Health and Human Services and a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress before returning to Urban.

As dean, Feder built Georgetown's Public Policy Institute into one of the nation's leading schools. She is an elected member of the Institute of Medicine, the National Academy of Public Administration, and the National Academy of Social Insurance; a former chair and board member of AcademyHealth; a member of the Center for American Progress Action Fund Board, the Board of the National Academy of Social Insurance, and the Hamilton Project's Advisory Council; and a senior advisor to the Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured. In 2006 and 2008, she was the Democratic nominee for Congress in Virginia's 10th congressional district.



Richard Johnson is a senior fellow in the Income and Benefits Policy Center at the Urban Institute, where he directs the Program on Retirement Policy. His current research focuses on older Americans' employment and retirement decisions, long-term services and supports for older adults with disabilities, and state and local pensions. His recent studies have examined job loss at older ages, occupational change after age 50, employment prospects for African Americans and Hispanics over age 50, and the impact of the 2007–09 recession and its aftermath on older workers and future retirement incomes. He has also written extensively about retirement preparedness, including the financial and health risks people face as they approach retirement, economic hardship in the years before Social Security's early eligibility age, and the adequacy of the disability

safety net.

Johnson's long-term services and supports research focuses on financing options and uses DYNASIM, Urban's dynamic microsimulation model, to project demand for services under current and alternative policies. His other major research thread involves state and local pension plans. He recently directed a team of researchers evaluating public pension plans in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, and he is examining how reforms might affect public-sector employees.

Johnson earned his AB from Princeton University and his PhD from the University of Pennsylvania, both in economics.



Michelle H. Norris is president of the National Church Residences Development Corporation and senior vice president of business development and public policy at National Church Residences. She joined the organization in 1993 as director of corporate financial services.

Norris is responsible for the growth of National Church Residences' affordable housing portfolio. This includes continued development of new construction and preservation using the low-income housing tax credit program. She also oversees the organization's Affordable Housing Investment Fund, disbursements from the fund to acquire other affordable housing communities, and public policy efforts on behalf of the organization.

Norris currently serves on the boards of National Affordable Housing Trust, Stewards of Affordable Housing for the Future, and Corporation for Supportive Housing. She is also president of the Ohio Housing Council and a past president of the National Affordable Housing Management Association. Norris holds a bachelor's degree from Miami University in Ohio.



Erika Poethig is an Institute fellow and director of urban policy initiatives at the Urban Institute. She assembles in-house experts to help local leaders draw insights from research and navigate policy challenges facing urban America in the 21st century. She also leads partnerships to develop new programs and strategies, translate research into policy and practice, and align philanthropic investments and federal policy.

Before joining Urban, Poethig was acting assistant secretary for policy, development, and research at the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, where she was responsible for research, policy, and market analysis as well as program development assistance. During her tenure in the Obama administration, she also served as deputy assistant secretary for policy development and was a leading architect of the White House Council for Strong Cities and Strong Communities. At the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, she was associate director for housing. She also was assistant commissioner for policy, resource, and program development at the City of Chicago's Department of Housing. In the late 1990s, she developed Mayor Richard M. Daley's campaign to combat predatory lending, prevent foreclosures, and stabilize communities. Previously, she was associate project director of the Metropolis Project, which produced the Metropolis 2020 agenda for regional leadership around the major issues faced by the metropolitan Chicago area.

Poethig was a Phi Beta Kappa member at the College of Wooster, a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Vienna, and has an MA with honors in public policy from the University of Chicago.



Dennis Shea is the founder and principal of Shea Public Strategies, LLC, a government relations and public policy firm based in Alexandria, Virginia, that focuses on housing policy and legislation. He currently serves as a consultant to the Bipartisan Policy Center's Health and Housing Task Force and the J. Ronald Terwilliger Foundation for Housing America's Families. He is also the vice chairman of the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission.

Shea was deputy chief of staff and counsel to former Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole, policy director for Dole's 1996 presidential campaign, and executive director of the President's Commission on the US Postal Service. In 2004, he was confirmed as assistant secretary for policy development and research at the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, where he led the department's analysis team.

Dennis received a BA in government, an MA in history, and a JD from Harvard University. He is admitted to the bar in New York and the District of Columbia.