

# Duckworth & Durbin to President: Do more to address crisis in Cairo, Illinois

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senators Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) and Dick Durbin (D-IL) are asking President Trump to form a Cabinet-level task force to address the housing, health and economic crises in Cairo, Illinois. In calling for the new task force focused on Cairo, the Senators highlighted that because the Federal government played a significant role in the city's economic decline, it should also play an active role in its



revival and recovery.

“Cairo was once home to bustling industries that supported local communities but, over the past century, has suffered a steady economic decline,” wrote the Senators. “Unlike many similarly situated communities, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) had a role in Cairo’s economic decline, and therefore, the federal government should play an active role in its recovery and revival... We hope that convening a new task force of relevant Cabinet members focused on the needs of Cairo will result in a plan to achieve our shared goals, as it is vital that the federal government does everything it can to promote the revitalization of this community.”

Full text of their letter is available below:

Dear Mr. President:

We write to respectfully request that you convene a new task force comprised of all relevant Cabinet Members to work on a strategy to address the housing, health, and economic crises confronting Cairo, Illinois.

Cairo was once home to bustling industries that supported local communities but, over the past century, has suffered a steady economic decline. Shipping, railroad, and ferry industries, employing thousands of Midwest Americans, followed. But over time, these industries began to abandon the city due to new technology, innovation and infrastructure, which led to the flight of jobs and the closing of community businesses such as banks, hospitals, and stores. However, unlike many similarly situated communities, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) had a role in Cairo's economic decline, and therefore, the federal government should play an active role in its recovery and revival.

Last year, HUD took the Alexander County Housing Authority into receivership after decades of mismanagement and lack of oversight that left hundreds of properties in Cairo in disrepair. Because of health and safety concerns, on April 10, 2017, HUD officials notified over 185 families that their homes would be demolished and they would be forced to move, many of them far from Cairo. This decision came after years of unanswered requests for repair and upkeep, leaving residents angry and frustrated with the hasty relocation thrust upon them, and concerned about the future of their families and their community.

After visiting the community and meeting with residents and local officials, we witnessed firsthand their perseverance and optimism for revitalizing their hometown. They made it clear to us— as they did to HUD Secretary Ben Carson during his recent visit— that they do not want to leave their community. However, they cannot and should not have to do it alone.

We hope that convening a new task force of relevant Cabinet members focused on the needs of Cairo will result in a plan to achieve our shared goals, as it is vital that the federal government does everything it can to promote the revitalization of this community.

We stand ready to work with your Administration to develop a strategy and provide resources to address the housing and economic crises facing Cairo and its residents. We look forward to receiving your prompt response.