



# Talking Points on Key Housing Issues

March 2026

*The following talking points help tell the residential construction industry story to the media, policymakers, NAHB members, local/civic organizations and consumers.*

## Key NAHB Housing Issues

1. **Key Wins Early in 2026.** NAHB has scored important victories to start the year, including House passage of the Housing for the 21st Century Act, HUD announcing it will further delay implementation of the 2021 IECC rule until Dec. 31, 2026, and congressional appropriators agreed to fully fund Job Corps after threatening a 50% cut to this vital job training program.
2. **A Strong Presence on Capitol Hill to Start the Year.** NAHB continues to act as the voice of the housing industry in Congress. NAHB Senior Officers Bill Owens and Bob Peterson met with more than 20 lawmakers and urged them to focus on regulatory and workforce development issues to ease housing costs; 2025 Chairman Buddy Hughes testified before Congress calling on lawmakers to eliminate excessive regulations; and the entire NAHB Government Affairs team met with nearly 50 House offices in a single day urging swift passage of the Energy Choice Act.
3. **Looking Ahead in the Coming Months.** As we seek to build on our wins from 2025 and early 2026, NAHB will continue to work with lawmakers at all levels of government to eliminate obstacles that are preventing builders from constructing more homes and apartments. And we will work diligently to elect pro-housing lawmakers to Congress in the 2026 midterm elections.
4. **Uncertainty Persists Following Supreme Court Tariff Ruling.** While the Supreme Court's Feb. 20 ruling reins in presidential authority to impose tariffs under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, the president still has broad latitude in setting tariff policy. NAHB will continue to urge the president to exempt building materials as part of his tariff strategy.
5. **2026 Housing Outlook: Ongoing Challenges, Incremental Gains.** The housing market will continue to face ongoing affordability challenges in 2026, including high housing price-to-income ratios and elevated land and construction costs.
6. **Housing Market Snapshot:** Due to the aftermath of the government shutdown last fall, the latest data for housing starts and new home sales is from December 2025. Single-family starts and multifamily production posted monthly gains in December from November while new and existing home sales were lower. Builder confidence in February registered a one-point decline to a reading of 36.

## Key Wins to Start the Year

- NAHB scores important key wins in early 2026.
  - The House on Feb. 9 passed the [Housing for the 21st Century Act](#), NAHB-supported legislation that contains key provisions related to land-use and zoning, regulatory reforms and financing tools.
  - At NAHB's urging, HUD on Feb. 2 said it will further extend the compliance date for adopting the 2021 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) and ASHRAE 90.1-2019 as the minimum energy-efficiency standards for certain single-family and multifamily housing programs an additional seven months until [Dec. 31, 2026](#).
  - Congressional appropriators agreed to [fully fund Job Corps](#) at \$1.76 billion in fiscal year 2026 after House appropriators last year proposed to slash funding by 50% to \$880 million. Job Corps is a vital source of skilled labor for the housing industry.
  - The House on Feb. 25 approved the [Homeowner Energy Freedom Act](#), legislation championed by NAHB. The bill would repeal burdensome provisions from the Inflation Reduction Act, including a provision that provides states \$1 billion to incentivize the adoption of the 2021 International Energy Conservation Code.

## A Strong Presence on Capitol Hill

- NAHB continues to act as the voice of housing in the halls of Congress.
- NAHB Chairman Bill Owens and First Vice Chairman Bob Peterson on Feb. 4-5 [met with nearly two dozen influential lawmakers](#) and urged them to focus on regulatory and workforce development issues to help stem rising housing costs.
- In an unprecedented move to advance legislation vital to NAHB members, every member of the NAHB Government Affairs team on Feb. 10 fanned out across Capitol Hill urging House lawmakers to bring the [Energy Choice Act](#) quickly to a vote on the House floor. Your Government Affairs team met with nearly 50 House offices to seek prompt action on legislation that would prevent state or local governments from banning the use of gas in homes and buildings
- 2025 Chairman Buddy Hughes testified before Congress on Jan. 22 and [called on lawmakers to eliminate excessive regulations](#) that are preventing builders from increasing the housing supply.
- NAHB Chief Lobbyist Lake Coulson on Jan. 14 participated in a [Housing Affordability Roundtable](#) hosted by the New Democrat Coalition. Lawmakers and housing stakeholders discussed ways to address affordability challenges and enact federal housing finance reforms.

- And in 2025, NAHB achieved [significant advocacy wins](#) that positively impacted the housing industry and our members. View the full report by logging on [nahb.org](http://nahb.org) and typing “2025 Advocacy Victories” in the search bar at the top of the page.

## Looking Ahead in 2026

- As we move through the year, NAHB will seek to build on our wins from 2025 and early 2026. We will continue to:
  - Work with the administration and Congress to eliminate regulatory obstacles that are preventing builders from constructing more homes and apartments.
  - Urge Congress to move quickly to pass a major housing package that cuts red tape, addresses zoning and land-use policies, and provides state and local governments an array of options to increase housing production.
  - Assist state and local HBAs as they work with local officials to overturn inefficient zoning rules, lower impact fees and expedite approvals for new home construction.
  - Ensure that housing remains a top national priority by working to elect pro-housing, pro-business candidates in the 2026 midterm elections.

## Uncertainty Persists Following Supreme Court Tariff Ruling

- The Supreme Court on Feb. 20 ruled that President Trump’s attempts to use emergency powers under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) was not valid.
- While the Supreme Court’s ruling reins in presidential authority to impose tariffs under IEEPA, Trump still has wide latitude in setting tariff policy.
- Indeed, shortly after the Supreme Court verdict, the president imposed a new, global tariff of 10%. Trump has threatened to raise the levy to 15%.
- Under the law he has now invoked, Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974, tariffs may last only 150 days unless Congress extends them.
- Moreover, the Supreme Court’s ruling does not reverse duties imposed under other statutory authorities available to the president. This includes the approximately 35% combined antidumping and countervailing duties on Canadian softwood lumber, the 10% global Section 232 tariff on softwood lumber, and the 50% global Section 232 tariff on steel and aluminum imports.
- This tariff uncertainty, along with whether importers and businesses that paid tariffs under IEEPA can receive up to \$175 billion in refunds, leaves tariff policy in a state of chaos that will likely result in additional, complex litigation.

- American consumers and businesses are unsure how any new tariffs will affect them.
- In the meantime, more than 60% of builders surveyed by NAHB have reported seeing higher costs due to tariffs.
- With the nation facing a housing affordability crisis, [NAHB continues to urge the president to exempt building materials](#) as part of his tariff strategy because they raise construction costs, impede supply chains and result in market and business uncertainty that make it difficult for builders to price their homes.
- On the legislative front, NAHB worked with Sens. Jacky Rosen (D-Nev.) and Chris Coons (D-Del.) to introduce the [Housing Tariff Exclusion Act](#). The bill would address the housing affordability crisis by creating an exemption process for building materials from tariffs.

## 2026 Housing Outlook: Ongoing Challenges, Small Gains

- Housing affordability conditions remain a top concern for most Americans.
- The housing market will continue to face ongoing affordability challenges in 2026, including high housing price-to-income ratios and elevated land and construction costs.
- The [outlook is one of cautious optimism](#) as builders contend with rising material and labor prices and policy uncertainty, while builders and buyers alike should benefit from anticipated fiscal and monetary easing that will moderate housing finance costs and mortgage rates.
- On the labor front, the government reported nearly 300,000 job openings in the construction industry in December. NAHB estimates that the residential construction sector will need to add roughly 740,000 workers a year just to keep pace with the industry's growth, retirements and departures.
- Meanwhile, residential building material prices continue to experience elevated growth. Price growth has been above 3% since June 2025, despite continued weakness in the new residential construction market.
- One silver lining is along the interest rate front. NAHB expects mortgage rates to remain slightly above 6% this year and unevenly trend slightly lower as the Federal Reserve is projected to make two 25 basis point rate cuts this year to reach a terminal federal funds rate of 3.25% by the end of 2026.
- Given these market conditions, NAHB is anticipating slim single-family construction growth in the year ahead. Single-family starts are expected to increase 1.0% in 2026 to 940,000 units and move 5% higher in 2027 to a 984,000 pace.

- Multifamily starts are anticipated to fall 5% in 2026 to an annual pace of 392,000 units. The market has slowed due to tighter financing and rising construction costs and is moving towards a more constrained development environment.

<b>Housing Market Snapshot</b>			
Latest Data: <b>December 2025*</b> /January 2026 (as of 2/24/26)			
<b>Housing Starts</b>	Current Value	Monthly Change	Yearly Change
Single-family:	981,000 AR	4.1%	-9.0%
Multifamily:	423,000 AR	11.3%	-3.0%
<b>Median SF Home Price</b>			
New:	\$416,000	4.8%	-2.1%
Existing:	\$423,000	-0.4%	0.5%
<b>SF Home Sales</b>			
New:	745,000 AR	-1.7%	3.8%
Existing:	3,530,000 AR	-9.0%	-4.3%

All data is seasonally-adjusted, AR = Annual Rate, SF = Single-Family  
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, National Association of Realtors, tabulated by NAHB

\*Due to the government shutdown last fall, December is the last month that data for housing starts and new single-family home sales have been released.

[NAHB/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index](#) – The index, which measures builder confidence in the market for newly built single-family homes, was 36 in February, down one point from January. Any number below 50 indicates that more builders view sales conditions as poor than good.

**NAHB Chief Economist Robert Dietz’s analysis:** “High housing price-to-income ratios and elevated financing, construction and labor costs continue to act as headwinds on the housing sector. And while the majority of builders continue to deploy buyer incentives, including price cuts, many prospective buyers remain on the sidelines. On the positive side, easing inflation should continue to allow lower interest rates for mortgages and builder loans. The solution to ease affordability challenges is the enactment of policies that will bend the construction cost curve and enable additional supply of attainable housing.”