



2026 GLOBAL CONFERENCE

LEADING IN A NEW ERA



PART 1: A CONVERSATION WITH US HUD SECRETARY SCOTT TURNER

[Video Plays] 00:00

Announcer 01:12

Thank you for joining us. Please welcome the panel to the stage.

Elex Michaelson 01:23

All right. Thank you for that golf clap, I appreciate it. Nice to see everybody.

Scott Turner 01:28

That was pretty light.

Elex Michaelson 01:29

My name is Elex Michaelson. I am an anchor on CNN for a show called *The Story Is*, which airs 9:00 to 11:00 Pacific every night, including tonight. And with us is the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Scott Turner. Let's get a real round of applause.

Scott Turner 01:44

Thank you.

Elex Michaelson 01:45

There we go. Nice to see you. Thank you for doing this. Welcome to Southern California. Good to have you here. So I know you want to make some news, so let's get right to it. We've got an announcement in terms of deregulation. What do you got?

Scott Turner 02:01

Well, thank you, Elex. It's great to be with you. And thank you all for being here. Can you all hear me? Okay, good. It's great to be with you. HUD is announcing today that we—essentially, we're streamlining our environmental review requirement as it pertains [picks up handheld microphone] Thank you. Is that better?

Elex Michaelson 02:19

All right, let's try this again. Start over.

Scott Turner 02:20

Sorry about that.

Elex Michaelson 02:21

All right. There we go. See, we just wanted to get them clapping. I think that was the whole purpose of that. Welcome, Mr. Secretary. I know you've got some news when it comes to deregulation.

Scott Turner 2:33

Yes, sir. Thank you, Elex. So, it's great to be here with everyone. The regulatory environment as it pertains to housing affordability has really been a big reason when you see the crippling of development and construction around our country. And so, we've been traveling around, talking to localities about taking inventory of their regulatory environment. We've been doing the same at HUD. And today we're announcing, as it pertains to our FHA mortgage insurance for multifamily building, that we're streamlining the environmental review requirements to make it easier for builders to build and also to have a better utilization of these properties so that we can build more multifamily affordable housing around our

country. And again, this just goes with our entire process and efforts that we've had in bringing down the regulatory environment.

Elex Michaelson 03:21

So what are some of those requirements that are no longer going to be in place?

Scott Turner 03:24

Well, if you look at it, we're just reviewing the railroad vibration requirements, the pipelines. We're looking at fall hazards, things that are duplicative and burdensome to developers when they're developing multifamily properties. And so to rescind these, to review these requirements, to make it easier for the builders to build, will bring the cost down, which again, will go to those that are renting multifamily homes. Because as you know, Elex, we need multifamily, affordable housing in our country, and the more we can ease the regulatory environment, the better we'll be, not only for the builders and developers, but for those that are renting these properties around the country.

Elex Michaelson 04:01

So does that start immediately?

Scott Turner 04:03

Yes. We're announcing it today.

Elex Michaelson 04:05

All right.

Scott Turner 04:06

And to talk to everyone about this, we—I personally, the president, HUD, we've been very intentional about taking inventory of regulations from a HUD standpoint, from a federal standpoint. And we can get into this in our conversation, but also encouraging others around the country, and particularly localities, to do the same to ease this environment for builders.

Elex Michaelson 04:30

Well, as you know, affordable housing is a huge issue around the country, especially here in California. What do you see as the biggest obstacle to building affordable housing?

Scott Turner 04:41

Well, when you look at the supply, we need about seven million units of housing in our country. That'll be single-family, multifamily, duplex, manufactured housing, condo. And when we came into HUD, the first thing that we said is, "Let's look at all the regulations that we have at HUD." And as I started traveling around the country, holding stakeholder convenings and meetings, I asked industry experts, builders, developers, "What is the biggest barrier to building affordable housing?" And the top of the list, 100 percent, is regulation. And so we have to look from a federal standpoint. We took down the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule, which really made Washington a national zoning board. And heavy-handedness from Washington does not help localities around the country build communities that they need. Every community in our country has unique needs. Washington doesn't know Frisco, Texas, or Bethesda, Maryland, like those particular communities. So we restored the flexibility and the ownership back to localities. Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing, that rule from the Biden-Obama era did not build one single-family home. It just added more myriads of paperwork. And so we took this down, and I've been asking localities around the country to do the same. We all understand what the problem is, but are we willing to do something about it? And that is taking down regulation.

Elex Michaelson 06:12

And where do you think that that's working?

Scott Turner 06:14

Well, I've traveled around the country, and there are certain states that are ahead of the game that are doing better than other states. I've seen a great job being done in Florida, also in Texas, and other states that are doing well. And I'll have more answers because we're actually putting together a report of best practices from my travels and meetings around the country with localities that are doing a great job, and some that are doing a good job, but that can do better. And it does, it varies from rural areas to urban areas to suburban areas, but there are some states that are doing better than others. But it is my heart and my goal that across the country, that every state will do a great job in its regulatory environment.

Elex Michaelson 07:01

There was recently an executive order from President Trump when it comes to banking that makes a big impact in terms of housing. Talk to us about what exactly it said and what it's doing.

Scott Turner 07:11

Yes, sir. So the president signed two executive orders. One was to remove the barriers to affordable housing construction, and the one that Elex is referring to was also an EO that the president signed to open up the mortgage credit space. Because of Dodd-Frank, when Dodd-Frank came into law, it really took the community banks out of the mortgage lending game. Any bank, I believe, that was under \$30 billion in assets was taken out of the mortgage lending industry. And so with this EO, it increases competition in the mortgage credit industry. Also, to help first-time homebuyers, those with low to moderate income, and those in our rural areas. And so we want to increase that competition in the mortgage industry. And this is for creditworthy, trustworthy borrowers. The rigor is still there because often I get questions—"Hey, is this going to be another 2008, 2009?" It's nothing like that. This is to increase the competition and open it up for the hometown lender to be able to get back at the table.

Elex Michaelson 08:10

In terms of long-term planning, one of the themes of this conference is AI, right? And there's a lot of positive with AI, and then there's some negative with AI. Some are expecting that there could be 20, 30 percent unemployment because of AI in just a few years. What's the thought process in terms of housing, of planning for that? Of this idea of mass unemployment and what that could do to the housing market. How are you all thinking about planning for AI?

Scott Turner 08:39

Well, what I'm thinking about is that seven million number that I alluded to earlier. We need housing. And we have a lot of capable companies, developers, construction, builders, architects in our country that want to build, that want to innovate. You saw it at our innovative housing showcase last summer where we had manufactured build and modular homes. We had different material build, 3D printing. And so I'm not so much concerned about AI taking the jobs away from our people in our country, the brilliance of the people that build and develop housing. What I'm concerned about is making it affordable for American homeowners to buy a house and making it affordable for builders to build homes because we have the brilliance, the ingenuity, the innovativeness. We need to make the environment such that they can build. And so that's my concentration right now, and that's what we've been very intentional about.

Elex Michaelson 09:35

In terms of the issue of homelessness, HUD is also in charge of funding in terms of homelessness federally around the country. I know you've made some big changes in terms of that as well. What are you seeing in terms of results? Because I know some of the folks, the leaders here in California, have been frustrated that they haven't necessarily been getting as much money as they have in the past.

Scott Turner 09:55

Yeah, well, here's what I've been telling people, and a lot of this—and you're talking about the continuum of care—that's in litigation right now, so I can't get ahead of that or speak much about it. But the housing first model in our country, which was set up during the Obama administration, I believe, was supposed to eradicate homelessness in our country. But the real result is, is that there has been record funding, and I want everybody to hear me on this because this is not a political issue. This is a people, a person, a heart issue for our homeless friends and neighbors around the country. There's been record funding for homelessness, and yet homelessness went up 33 percent over the last several years. Well, that's the wrong play. And housing first is the wrong model. We can't just house people and expect to be okay. We can't create—which has been created—a homelessness industrial complex where we're just warehousing poverty, warehousing homelessness. We have to put the axe head to the root of homelessness and say, "Why are people homeless? Is it mental illness? Is it drug addiction?" And we have to be able to treat that, get people transformed, and then get them back to a life of self-sustainability. So it's a different paradigm. It's a different way to think about homelessness. We can't continue just to throw money at homelessness and then continue to renew those people that are receiving grants without the results that we need. I am very mission-minded and focused at HUD. Coming from the private sector, coming from professional sports, coming from business, you have to take inventory. Are the plays that you're running causing you to win? And if those plays are not causing you to win, then you need to call timeout and run a different play, get different playbook. And that's what you see in the mindset of this CoC life of self-sustainability.

Elex Michaelson 11:43

Well, not only were you a professional athlete, you're also a professional pastor. So talk to us about how you see faith-based operations as an important part of that, and sort of what you have learned from those in the faith-based space in terms of changing people's lives when it comes to homelessness.

Scott Turner 12:03

Yes, sir. Thank you, Elex, for bringing that up. So, our faith-based entities in America have been serving our homeless neighbors long before the federal government started serving. And in recent history, faith-based institutions have been pushed out of the game and made it very difficult for them to participate as it pertains to serving our homeless neighbors. And as I've traveled around the country, I've visited multiple faith-based ministries and entities that are treating, transforming, educating our homeless brothers and sisters, and children around the country, where the model and the mindset is not just to get them off the streets and get them into a home, but to look at them from a holistic standpoint. Yes, we got you safe housing, but how can we treat the problem? How can we educate you with wraparound services? How can we get to the faith component? So they look at people from a mental, spiritual, and physical standpoint, and the results that I've seen from Gospel Rescue Mission, from Our Calling, from places I've visited in Florida, from Teen Challenge, and others around the country, I literally—

Elex Michaelson 13:17

The Dream Center here in Southern California—

Scott Turner 13:20

The Dream Center here in Southern California. They are not just talking about helping homeless people. They have literally dedicated their lives to seeing results and get people transformed. And y'all, as a pastor, as an American, as just Scott, to see people's lives changed and not just to remain the same or worse, but to see people fulfill their God-given potential is not only my heart, but it's what wakes me up and drives me in this job today.

Elex Michaelson 13:52

One of your great passions has been opportunity zones, which is something that you worked on in the first Trump administration under then Secretary Ben Carson, something you're working on now. For people that don't know, what is an opportunity zone?

Scott Turner 14:04

Well, thank you. So, during the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2018, the opportunity zone policy was signed into law. And opportunity zones are those areas around our country, urban, tribal, and rural, that you see extreme poverty, that you see blight, that you see once thriving areas that are now boarded up, and we've all seen them, we've all driven by them. Maybe some of us have lived in these places before. And so there's 8,764 opportunity zone tracts around our country, urban, tribal, and rural. And the incentive was a capital gain tax incentive. Normally, if you incur a capital gain by the sale of an asset, then you have to send that capital gain or that tax to the Department of Treasury. Because of the opportunity zone legislation, you can invest that capital gain. Let's say you have a million dollars in a capital gain. You can invest that by way of a qualified opportunity zone fund, and that fund then becomes a vehicle for you to invest in the opportunity zone project, be it operating businesses, be it new housing, and what have you. So thus far, in opportunity zones, there's been about \$100 billion of private investment into distressed areas around the country. There's been 400,000 units of housing, and there's been 500,000 new jobs. But one of the sweetest statistic is one million people have been lifted out of poverty inside of opportunity zones alone. So you think about a million individuals who've been lifted off the poverty rolls into a life of self-sustainability. And because of the Working Family Tax Cut, or the One Big Beautiful Bill now, opportunity zones have been made permanent. And governors will begin to pick opportunity zone sites here this summer through the end of September. And January 1, 2027, Opportunity Zones 2.0 will begin, and I'm very excited about it.

Elex Michaelson 15:55

You travel all over the country. You just told me you were in, like, six cities in seven days. Of everything you've seen, what is the most interesting innovation that's out there that maybe people don't know about? Something that's coming next that you think more people need to know about.

Scott Turner 16:11

From an opportunity zone standpoint—

Elex Michaelson 16:12

From opportunity zone or just from housing in general. Take it whichever way you want.

Scott Turner 16:16

Yes, and so you look at manufactured housing is one that's top of mind. Manufactured housing. We have about 22 million people in our country that have manufactured housing. It's about, I think it's 70 percent of new—

Elex Michaelson 16:30

When you say manufactured housing, what does that mean exactly?

Scott Turner 16:32

Yeah. I'm not talking about—when we think about mobile homes of old, this is totally different. Manufactured housing today is so innovative and the creativity—you have manufactured housing homes now that have garages, that have outdoor patio, living space. The concepts and the construction is not only secure and safe and withstands the worst storms in our country. But don't think about mobile homes of old. These are 21st century manufactured, beautiful molding, granite, marble inside of manufactured homes.

Elex Michaelson 17:07

So this is built somewhere else, right?

Scott Turner 17:09

Yes, it's built somewhere else and then trucked—

Elex Michaelson 17:10

Built somewhere else and then put in, which is something that they're looking at doing here—

Scott Turner 17:14

Yes—

Elex Michaelson 17:14

in a lot of the fire zones—

Scott Turner 17:15

That's right—

Elex Michaelson 17:15

As a way to quickly build in those areas—

Scott Turner 17:18

That's right.

Elex Michaelson 17:18

There's a business called Model Z, which I think we were at together that's doing that here in Southern California, and it's the idea of getting it done. So instead of having all the building costs in this one place, it's much cheaper to do this in another place, right?

Scott Turner 17:31

Right. It's about half the cost, and less waste, and half the time. And so that's been the very ingenuity I've seen across our country. And also those entities that are serving our homeless friends and being very creative and getting people off the streets and back to sustainability. And at HUD alone, we're using, as you pertain, AI and innovation to increase transparency, in particular at the sub-recipient level. Innovation—when you think about the federal government and innovation, they don't really go together. But at HUD, we want to make sure that we're taking inventory of every dollar of American taxpayer that goes to housing in our country. And so our CFO and his office have come up with Project HUGS, which you will hear about in the coming days, to really streamline our processes and have transparency and accountability for every dollar that goes to housing, in particular at the sub-recipient level in America.

Elex Michaelson 18:29

A couple fun things to wrap up on. What's it really like to sit at a Trump cabinet meeting?

Scott Turner 18:37

It's a lot of fun. I will tell you this, that when you sit down at the table, be ready. Because your name may not be on the call list, but he can call on you at any time, and he's not afraid to call on you and to hear what you're doing at your agency. But the beauty of it is, is that all of our cabinet meetings are on TV, and they're open and they're transparent, and you can hear about what's going on at Commerce or HUD or Agriculture or Transportation or wherever it is, wherever the cabinet members lead. And to me, the American people deserve to know what's going on with their president, vice president, and the leaders of our cabinet. But I will say they're fun, they're challenging, it makes you think, and you always have to be prepared to give an answer because you never know when the president is going to call upon you. But when he does call upon you, he wants to sincerely know what's going on and support you in that effort.

Elex Michaelson 19:30

What's something about President Trump that we might not know if we didn't know him as well as you did?

Scott Turner 19:36

He loves music and he has one of the best playlists that I've seen. And he loves to play music for people that come to the White House.

Elex Michaelson 19:44

And what does he play for you?

Scott Turner 19:45

Well, I've heard every genre, from rock to orchestra to classical to R&B to country to gospel, and he has it in his iPad, and he plays it, and he likes to play it loud. He wants to make sure that everybody hears it.

Elex Michaelson 20:03

Okay. And lastly, just to end with something fun. You're the only cabinet secretary that was also in the NFL. So give us your pick. What do you think next season, who's going to win the Super Bowl?

Scott Turner 20:18

Oh. Well, y'all know I played for the Redskins, the Chargers, and the Broncos, and so I would be happy if any of them went to the Super Bowl. But I tell you what, I think it's going to be a toss-up. I think a lot of teams this year were right on the cusp. You look at the Chargers, they have a good team. They play well. The Commanders had a great draft. They were just in the NFC championships, I believe, a couple years ago. They have a wonderful young quarterback in Jayden Daniels. You can never count out Green Bay. You can never count out New England. Seattle is hot. They have a wonderful young coach, and their team believes in him. I'm a football guy. I love the players. I love the game. I want to keep the integrity of the game, the health and safety of the players, and also the engagement of the fans around it. Football is an American sport, and for the American people to be able to enjoy the highest level of sport with integrity, is really what my heart is, and so I'm looking forward to it.

Elex Michaelson 21:15

You didn't mention the Rams. The Super Bowl's here in LA this year.

Scott Turner 21:18

It is, and God willing, I'll be able to come. But the Rams are hot, too. Sean McVay is a great coach, and his players love him. And they also have a wonderful stadium. SoFi's awesome. I didn't get to play in stadiums like that in my day.

Elex Michaelson 21:33

Well, SoFi, not only—we have the FIFA World Cup, the first American game is happening here, then we've got, in 2027, the Super Bowl, and in 2028, we've got the Olympics. Yeah. All at SoFi Stadium.

Scott Turner 21:44

Yeah, LA is hot.

Elex Michaelson 21:45

Yes, it's a good time—

Scott Turner 21:46

You got to get ready—

Elex Michaelson 21:46

To be in Southern California. We just got to get our housing more affordable and then it'll all be perfect. Thank you very much

Scott Turner 21:51

Thank you, sir.

Elex Michaelson 21:51

Mr. Secretary. Thank you very much.

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