

State Reps Tell Congress: Pass 'Firewall' Bill Now!

Appearing together (by telephone) on The LaRouche Show Oct. 6, Rep. Juanita Walton of St. Louis, Mo., Rep. Harold James of Philadelphia, Pa., and former Rep. LaMar Lemmons III of Detroit, Mich., discussed with host Marcia Merry-Baker, Economics editor of *EIR*, the fight to get Congress to pass Lyndon LaRouche's Homeowners and Bank Protection Act (HBPA). Resolutions in support of the Act have been introduced, so far, in five state legislatures (Florida, Michigan, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, and Illinois), and are pending in three others (Missouri, Alabama, and Tennessee). In addition, a petition in support of the resolution is circulating nationwide (see list of endorsers below). The states represented by the three legislators are at the top of the list of those threatened by the blowout of the housing bubble and the foreclosure "tsunami" it has caused. State representatives Walton and James, and Lemmons' father, Rep. LaMar Lemmons II, have each introduced emergency resolutions memorializing Congress to pass the HBPA. Matthew Ogden of the LaRouche Youth Movement also joined the discussion. (The LaRouche Show airs every Saturday at 1 p.m. Eastern Time on www.larouchepub.com.)

Asked about the conditions in their states that led the lawmakers to call for Federal action, Representative Walton noted that foreclosures in the St. Louis area have increased by 115% in the recent period. Then, Representative James described how representatives of the LaRouche movement had briefed him on the HBPA, and what he did about it. Here are excerpts from the discussion.

James: I got all this information as relates to the homeowners, foreclosures, and just seeing how many foreclosures there are in our city, in Philadelphia and in Pennsylvania—it's alarming.... We have a program to try to help assist home-

owners who lose mortgages and it's just overwhelming.... So when this was brought to my attention, I put the co-sponsorship memo out, asking Congress to do something right away, and was able to get about 41 co-sponsors. [James's bill is H.R. 418.]

Walton: That's excellent. And in our state, Missouri, we're not in session, so I have mine drafted. I did submit it to the NBCSL, which is the National Black Caucus of State Legislators. In fact, we had our meeting last month in Washington, and looked at items that we should have as our agenda for 2008, and that was the number-one thing that was on the list: the foreclosures, and addressing that issue, and speaking to Congress on that issue.

Baker: LaMar, you're speaking from Detroit, and I know that over the last few years, you have been leading walking tours in ruined neighborhoods, to call attention to this.

Lemmons: As a matter of fact we are here in Detroit, and now I can say that this is "the belly of the beast." The home of all the Big Three [automakers], and there's very little Big Three inside the city of Detroit. They have the headquarters here in Auburn Hills, Dearborn—those are suburbs—and the city of Detroit. But the reality is that there's little auto manufacturing going on here.

There are massive amounts of homeowner foreclosures, and Lyndon LaRouche was the *only* person I know, to come out with a national program for a moratorium on the foreclosures—and we need it, because our House district is number five in the entire United States. And these are all poor and working-class people in the first place.

And the casinos that we have built as a so-called "economic solution" haven't worked. As a matter of fact, the crisis has accelerated, because people have been desperate and they

have been gambling, and they have been losing, and it has accelerated the rate of foreclosures here in the city of Detroit. No city in the nation—cumulatively—of its size, has had more foreclosures than the city of Detroit. . . . Detroit having at one point, at the last census, approximately a million [people]. At the next census, we're probably going to be down below 750,000. . . .

Baker: And in Pennsylvania, Harold, you likewise, Philadelphia, and in the Pittsburgh area, you are ranking among the top. And as you say, the agencies which might give some advice were swamped.

James: Overwhelmed. Yes, they're overwhelmed. . . .

Lemmons: In Michigan, we were able to garner, in one day, 21 co-sponsors, and one or two of them Republicans. They're leery when something just comes up and moves that quick, so we didn't get that co-sponsorship. But we are going to do a House Concurrent Resolution, which would be both chambers, as well as we'll open it up for co-sponsorship whenever we get the chance, and that's where the LaRouche Youth Movement comes in, wherever we get movement on the bill. . . .

And once on the floor, we'll open it up for co-sponsorship, and I assure you, it will be massively bipartisan, and you can expect at least a majority of the members of the legislature to support it, being, a majority being 56 or more, supporting. So it will send a real message to Congress, as soon as we can get movement on the legislation. And the only thing which has held us back from getting movement is that the economic crisis here in Michigan has been so bad that, on the front burner, has been to deal with the almost \$2 billion annual budget deficit that we've had. . . . We've got *massive* homeless problems that we've never had here in Detroit. And that's another by-product. . . .

Baker: Juanita, you were going to say more on that?

Walton: In fact, when I was in Washington the other week, my husband and I walked from the hotel to Union Station, and he happened to see that someone homeless had set up, it looked like they had just kind of been there for quite some time, in terms of the blankets and everything that they had; they had quite a bit of stuff they had accumulated—he was just shocked to see it. We saw a lot of homelessness and even people that had mental illness walking around, that you could see, and this was in a two-block walk. And, I guess you would say, he really hadn't seen it. I said, "Look, only thing you have to do, is get out of your car in St. Louis and walk downtown, and you'll see the same thing, in the parks in the city—of St. Louis—and throughout the city. You just have to get out of your car, and walk, and start looking. . . .

Baker: Harold, I understand you have been involved in taking this to national institutions. Were you in Washington

for the Congressional Black Caucus?

Lemmons: . . . I'll be meeting with my Congresswoman, who also happens to be the chair of the Black Caucus, and I'll also be meeting with the chair—being here in Detroit—with the chair of the House Judiciary Committee, John Conyers. . . . I have spoken with John and he is 100% supportive of it. We've got to get someone to introduce it in Congress. And now, we have control of the House, and there's no reason whatsoever that we shouldn't get some movement in Congress on this legislation.

Walton: I've also spoken to my Congressman, Congressman [William Lacy] Clay, in reference to the issue, and he's very aware of it. . . .

Baker: Now, Harold James, you also have on the Republican side, Sen. [Arlen] Specter, who says he wants to pay attention to the issue. But you've had Rep. [Paul] Kanjorski from the Wilkes-Barre area that's completely bombed-out, old coal mining, milling area, who said a couple weeks ago that the entire financial system is coming down. So, do you see any motion from your delegation or anywhere in the country you've been speaking to people about?

James: Well, I wrote all three of our Congressmen from Philadelphia: that's [Robert] Brady, [Chaka] Fattah, and Allyson Schwartz. And I sent them a letter this week; I haven't got a response from them. I sent them copies of the resolutions, but I haven't had a response yet. But I'm sure the LaRouche Youth Movement will get some kind of response this week. . . .

Baker: Matt Ogden has some breaking news, and then, maybe even if Harold has to leave, he still would want to hear about it right now. Go ahead, Matt.

Ogden: The news is that the first legislative body in the nation has actually passed the resolution for the HBPA: The Pontiac, Michigan City Council passed a resolution the day before yesterday calling for Congress to act immediately on the HBPA.

Baker: Matt, also, there's Illinois.

Ogden: The other breaking news is that just like in the three states that we have represented on the line, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Missouri, another state has also taken the initiative to submit a draft resolution to at least circulate: The Illinois state legislature now has a draft resolution circulating and collecting co-signers. . . .

Lemmons: . . . We've got to make sure the Presidential candidates, particularly the Democratic, but both parties, are addressing these issues. I hear everything about 9/11 and who is going to prevent the next 9/11, but I hear nothing about the 9/11 that's happening to our economy, I hear nothing about what's happening with Katrina, I hear nothing about the banking. So we've got to make sure that these are the issues being addressed by the Presidential candidates.