

BEN CARSON'S TENURE AT HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT WAS RIFE WITH SCANDALS AND MISMANAGEMENT

Highlights

- Ben Carson authorized his wife to order more than \$31,000 of taxpayer-funded office furniture.
 - The furniture was ordered amid budget cuts to programs that supported the homeless, elderly, and poor.
 - A whistleblower complaint showed that the furniture purchase violated federal purchasing laws and an employee was demoted for refusing to purchase the furniture.
- Ben Carson's family was heavily involved in HUD operations, sparking an investigation by the inspector general.
 - Carson's son continued to attend official HUD events despite warnings from HUD legal counsel.
- Under Ben Carson, top HUD positions were unfilled for an extended period of time, with many remaining vacant at the end of his tenure.
 - At the end of his tenure, some HUD divisions had 25 to 30% of jobs unfilled.
- Ben Carson made offensive statements and proposed policies that were harmful to transgender people during his tenure at HUD.
 - Carson referred to transgender women as "big, hairy men" during a HUD visit.
 - Carson proposed HUD rules that would allow HUD-funded shelters to discriminate against transgender homeless individuals.
- Ben Carson found the job at HUD difficult and often ceded much of his power to political appointees.
- Under Ben Carson, HUD scaled back efforts to enforce fair housing laws.
- In his first month as secretary, Ben Carson likened slaves to immigrants.
- Ben Carson supported \$6.2 billion in HUD budget cuts.
- Ben Carson confused Real Estate Owned properties (REOs) with Oreo cookies during congressional testimony.

Carson Authorized His Wife To Order \$31,000 In Taxpayer-Funded Office Furniture Amid Department Budget Cuts, Violating Federal Law To Do So

UNDER CARSON, HUD PURCHASED OVER \$31,000 IN OFFICE FURNITURE DURING DEPARTMENT BUDGET CUTS

HUD Officials Spent \$31,000 On Office Furniture During Cuts To Programs That Supported The Homeless, Elderly, And Poor. According to the New York Times, "Department of Housing and Urban Development officials spent \$31,000 on a new dining room set for Secretary Ben Carson's office in late 2017 — just as the White House circulated its plans to slash HUD's programs for the homeless, elderly and poor, according to federal procurement records." [New York Times, [2/27/18](#)]

The Furniture Was Ordered Without Requesting Approval From The House Or Senate Appropriations Committees As Required By Law. According to the New York Times, "Department officials did not request approval from the House or Senate Appropriations Committees for the expenditure of \$31,561, even though federal law requires congressional approval 'to furnish or redecorate the office of a department head' if the cost exceeds \$5,000." [New York Times, [2/27/18](#)]

A WHISTLEBLOWER COMPLAINT CLAIMED THAT SHE WAS PRESSURED TO BREAK FEDERAL LAW AND WAS DEMOTED WHEN SHE REFUSED TO COMPLY WITH THE ILLEGAL FURNITURE PURCHASE

A Whistleblower Complaint Showed That Candy Carson Pressured Officials To Find The Money For The Expensive Furniture, “Even If It Meant Circumventing The Law.” According to the New York Times, “The purchase of the custom hardwood table, chairs and hutch came a month after a top agency staff member filed a whistle-blower complaint charging Mr. Carson’s wife, Candy Carson, with pressuring department officials to find money for the expensive redecoration of his offices, even if it meant circumventing the law.” [New York Times, [2/27/18](#)]

A Whistleblower From HUD Said She Was Demoted After Resisting Candy Carson’s Demand For The New Furniture. According to the New York Times, “About a month before it was ordered, Helen G. Foster, a former top HUD official, filed a complaint with the Office of Special Counsel, a federal whistle-blower agency, claiming that she had been demoted and transferred after resisting Mrs. Carson’s attempts to get around the \$5,000 redecoration law. The pressure began in January 2017, before Mr. Carson was even confirmed, when HUD’s interim secretary, Craig Clemmensen, told Mrs. Foster to help secure redecorating funds for Mrs. Carson, a frequent visitor to the department’s Washington headquarters who serves as an informal adviser to her husband, the complaint said.” [New York Times, [2/27/18](#)]

Carson’s Family Was Inappropriately Involved In Official HUD Operations

CARSON’S SON WAS HEAVILY INVOLVED IN OFFICIAL HUD OPERATIONS

Carson Helped Organize HUD’s “Listening Tour”

Carson Had His Son Help Organize A HUD “Listening Tour” And Invited People He Had Potential Business Dealings With. According to the Washington Post, “Housing and Urban Development Secretary Ben Carson allowed his son to help organize an agency ‘listening tour’ in Baltimore last summer despite warnings from department lawyers that doing so risked violating federal ethics rules, according to internal documents and people familiar with the matter. Career officials and political appointees raised concerns days before the visit that Carson’s son, local businessman Ben Carson Jr., and daughter-in-law were inviting people with whom they potentially had business dealings, the documents show.” [Washington Post, [1/31/18](#)]

Carson Jr. Connected His Personal Network With HUD Employees, Joined Official Conference Calls, And Copied His Wife On Official Emails. According to the Washington Post, “Carson Jr. put people he’d invited in touch with his father’s deputies, joined agency staff on official conference call about the listening tour and copied his wife on related email exchanges, according to emails.” [Washington Post, [1/31/18](#)]

Carson’s Deputy General Counsel Urged Carson To Stop His Son’s Involvement In Official Events

HUD’s Deputy General Counsel Urged Carson Jr. Be Removed From HUD Events, Citing A Conflict Of Interest. According to the Washington Post, “I expressed my concern that this gave the appearance that the Secretary may be using his position for his son’s private gain,” Linda M. Cruciani, HUD’s deputy general counsel for operations, wrote in a July 6 memo, describing her reaction upon learning of Carson Jr.’s involvement from other staff members. The two-page memo, obtained by The Washington Post under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), details conference calls and meetings that Cruciani and her colleagues had with Carson, his son and other senior HUD officials to urge that Carson Jr. not be involved in the listening tour, an event intended to give the secretary a chance to see federally supported housing projects firsthand and to convey his policy vision to the public.” [Washington Post, [1/31/18](#)]

Carson Jr. Continued To Attend Official HUD Events With His Father

Carson Jr. Continued To Attend Official HUD Events. According to the Washington Post, “Carson Jr. has continued to attend official HUD events with his father and other elected officials, including during the secretary’s October trip to Baltimore’s Helping Up Mission, a faith-based group that helps men facing addiction and homelessness.” [Washington Post, [1/31/18](#)]

CARSON'S WIFE AND DAUGHTER-IN-LAW ATTENDED OFFICIAL MEETINGS AT HUD

Carson's Wife And Daughter-In-Law Attended Official Meetings At HUD. According to the Washington Post, "The warnings highlight the extent to which Carson has relied on close family members since joining the Cabinet. His wife, Candy Carson, son Carson Jr. and daughter-in-law Merlynn Carson have attended official meetings, according to current and former HUD officials. Early last year, Candy Carson accompanied her husband around the building and to official meetings both inside and outside HUD, officials said." [Washington Post, [1/31/18](#)]

THE INSPECTOR GENERAL OPENED AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE ROLES CARSON'S FAMILY MEMBERS HELD AT HUD

The Inspector General Opened An Investigation Into Carson's Family Roles In HUD. According to CNN, "The Department of Housing and Urban Development's inspector general is looking into the role HUD Secretary Ben Carson's family has played at the agency, a spokesman told CNN. Carson called earlier this month for the inspector general to 'review' the role his family has played at the department after The Washington Post reported that HUD officials expressed ethics concerns about their role." [CNN, [2/20/18](#)]

HUD IG Said Carson "Could Have Done More To Avoid" The Appearance Of Conflicts With His Family

HUD IG: Carson "Could Have Done More To Avoid" The Appearance Of Conflicts In His Family's Involvement At HUD. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of the Inspector General's report titled Investigation into Alleged Misuse of Office by the Secretary for the Private Gain of a Relative, "Simply put, while the evidence does not establish that Secretary Carson misused his position for the 'private gain' of Carson Jr., the evidence does suggest that Secretary Carson could have done more to avoid 'any actions creating the appearance' that he was using his office for the private gain of relatives." [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of the Inspector General's report - Investigation into Alleged Misuse of Office by the Secretary for the Private Gain of a Relative, [9/29/20](#)]

Under Carson, Top HUD Positions Were Unfilled For An Extended Period Of Time, With Many Remaining Vacant At The End Of His Tenure

UNDER CARSON, TOP HUD POSITIONS REMAINED UNFILLED

Under Carson, Top Positions At HUD Were Unfilled Nine Months After Carson Took The Position. According to the Economist, "In the nine months since he took the post, Dr Carson has stayed inconspicuous and inscrutable. The agency seems directionless. Only four of the 13 top positions, which must be confirmed by the Senate, have been filled. No nominee has been announced to be either the inspector-general or head of the policy development and research office." [Economist, [11/29/17](#)]

At The End Of Carson's Tenure In Some HUD Divisions 25 To 30% Of Jobs Were Unfilled Or Only Temporarily Occupied. According to the New York Times, "And it was not just the planning unit. In some divisions, as many as 25 to 30 percent of jobs were unfilled or occupied by interim employees." [New York Times, [6/18/21](#)]

The Agency's Total Head Count Fell By 20% During Carson's Tenure. According to the New York Times, "As a result, the agency's total head count fell by 20 percent, to 6,837 from 8,576, from 2012 to 2019." [New York Times, [6/18/21](#)]

Carson Made Offensive Statements And Proposed Policies That Were Harmful To Transgender People During His Tenure At HUD

CARSON MADE DEROGATORY COMMENTS ABOUT TRANSGENDER PEOPLE REGARDING HOMELESS SHELTERS

Carson Referred To Transgender Women As “Big, Hairy Men” Attempting To Enter Women’s Homeless Shelters. According to CNN, “Housing and Urban Development Secretary Ben Carson made dismissive comments in a recent meeting that multiple people present interpreted as an attack on transgender people, The Washington Post reported Thursday. Carson expressed concern about ‘big, hairy men’ attempting to enter women’s homeless shelters, according to three people present, the Post reported. Two agency staffers also told the paper that during the meeting in HUD’s San Francisco office, Carson complained about the blurring of gender roles, a refrain that upset many staffers, the Post said.” [CNN, [9/19/19](#)]

CARSON PROPOSED A HOUSING RULE THAT WOULD ALLOW HUD-FUNDED HOMELESS SHELTERS TO TURN AWAY TRANSGENDER INDIVIDUALS

Carson Proposed A HUD Rule That Would Allow Federally Funded Facilities To Discriminate Against Transgender Individuals. According to CNN, “The Department of Housing and Urban Development is proposing a new rule that would allow federally funded homeless shelters to consider sex and gender identity when deciding whether to accommodate someone. [...] The proposed rule would permit shelters that have facilities, like bathrooms and sleeping quarters, separated by sex to establish policy that considers a person’s sex for allowing accommodation or admission to the facility or portion, which critics say would lead to transgender individuals being turned away or discouraged from seeking shelter and lead to a rise in homelessness and discrimination.” [CNN, [5/24/19](#)]

UNDER CARSON, HUD REMOVED ALL WEBSITE TRAINING MATERIALS FROM ITS WEBSITE ABOUT PREVENTING LGBT DISCRIMINATION IN SHELTERS

Under Carson, HUD Removed All Website Training Materials From Its Website About Preventing LGBT Discrimination In Shelters. According to CNN, “In 2017, HUD had removed from its website links to training materials to prevent LGBT discrimination in homeless shelters.” [CNN, [5/24/19](#)]

Carson Lacked The Experience To Run HUD And Found The Job Difficult

CARSON FOUND THE JOB AT HUD DIFFICULT

Carson Found The Job At HUD Puzzling And Frustrating. According to the New York Times, “Mr. Carson, people close to him said, has been whipsawed by a job he has found puzzling and frustrating — so much so that he considered quitting during recent wrangling over the department’s budget.” [New York Times, [3/5/18](#)]

Carson Said That The Job At HUD Had “More Complexities” Than Brain Surgery. According to the New York Times, “‘There are more complexities here than in brain surgery,’ Mr. Carson said in an interview last week. ‘Doing this job is going to be a very intricate process.’” [New York Times, [3/5/18](#)]

CARSON CEDED MUCH OF HIS POWER TO HIS POLITICAL APPOINTEES

Carson Took A Hands-Off Approach To Running The Department And Ceded Control To Political Appointees. According to the New York Times, “Mr. Carson, an unsuccessful 2016 Republican presidential candidate, took little interest in the day-to-day operations of the department, and was often informed of key hires by White House officials after the fact, according to people who worked with him. He often ceded control to political appointees, some embedded inside his department, others working from the White House, who pursued their own agendas.” [New York Times, [6/18/21](#)]

HUD Under Carson Scaled Back Efforts To Enforce Fair Housing Laws

POLICIES UNDER CARSON’S HUD ROLLED BACK ENFORCEMENT OF FAIR HOUSING POLICIES

Interviews With 20 Former Employees Under Carson’s HUD Confirmed That Carson Attempted To Reverse Housing Discrimination Protections. According to the New York Times, “The policy shift, detailed in interviews with 20 current and former Department of Housing and Urban Development officials and in internal agency emails, is meant to roll

back the Obama administration's attempts to reverse decades of racial, ethnic and income segregation in federally subsidized housing and development projects." [New York Times, [3/28/18](#)]

Carson Ordered A Freeze On Fair Housing Investigations From The Obama Administrations. According to the New York Times, "In an email in November, a top HUD official relayed the news that the head of the Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity division, Anna Maria Farías, had ordered a hold on about a half-dozen fair housing investigations given the highest priority under Mr. Carson's most recent predecessor, Julián Castro. The freeze would be in effect 'until further notice,' the official wrote." [New York Times, [3/28/18](#)]

Carson Stopped An Investigation Into Facebook Tools That Allowed Housing Advertisements To Exclude Certain Ethnic Groups. According to the New York Times, "HUD had opened a case in late 2016 in response to a ProPublica article that said Facebook gives advertisers the ability to exclude specific groups it calls 'ethnic affinities' from seeing their ads when their social media habits identified them as black, Hispanic or Asian-American. But even before Ms. Farías was appointed, Mr. Carson's aides ordered fair housing division officials to cancel a planned negotiating session with Facebook executives, leaving HUD to take Facebook at its word that the company's 'policies prohibit using our targeting options to discriminate.'" [New York Times, [3/28/18](#)]

Carson Attempted To Stop A Fair Housing Policy To Allow Housing Vouchers To Be Used In Affluent Areas

Carson Tried To Reverse A Program That Would Have Made It Easier For Housing Voucher Recipients To Use Their Vouchers In Affluent Neighborhoods. According to the New York Times, "This is not the first time critics have accused Mr. Carson, the only African-American man in President Trump's cabinet, of trying to stymie civil rights enforcement. Shortly after he was confirmed last year, Mr. Carson tried to reverse an Obama-era program that would make it easier for recipients of housing vouchers to use them in affluent neighborhoods. The move was struck down by the courts, and Mr. Carson abandoned the effort." [New York Times, [3/28/18](#)]

Carson Removed "Inclusive" And "Free From Discrimination" From HUD's Mission Statement

Carson Ordered That The Words "Inclusive" And "Free From Discrimination" Removed From HUD's Mission Statement. According to the New York Times, "The move coincides with the decision this month by Ben Carson, the secretary of housing and urban development, to strike the words 'inclusive' and 'free from discrimination' from HUD's mission statement." [New York Times, [3/28/18](#)]

In His First Month As Secretary, Carson Likened Slaves To Immigrants

SHORTLY AFTER TAKING OFFICE, CARSON LIKENED SLAVES TO IMMIGRANTS

Less Than A Month After His Cabinet Confirmation, Carson Likened Slaves To Immigrants. According to CNN, "Carson, who was confirmed to lead the department earlier this month, heralded the work ethic of immigrants before implying slaves who came to the United States worked harder than others. 'There were other immigrants who came in the bottom of slave ships, who worked even longer, even harder, for less, but they too had a dream that one day their sons, daughters, grandsons, granddaughters, great grandsons, great granddaughters might pursue prosperity and happiness in this land,' said Carson, who is black." [CNN, [3/7/17](#)]

Carson Supported \$6.2 Billion In HUD Budget Cuts

CARSON SUPPORTED \$6.2 BILLION IN HUD BUDGET CUTS

Trump Released A Budget Proposal That Would Cut HUD Funding By \$6.2 Billion. According to HousingWire, "In a move first hinted at over a week ago, President Donald Trump released his budget proposal on Thursday, complete with a proposed \$6.2 billion cut to the funding for the Department of Housing and Urban Development." [HousingWire, [3/16/17](#)]

A Statement Directly From Carson Confirmed That He Supported Trump’s Proposed Budget. According to HousingWire, “In a short statement issued late Thursday by HUD, Carson said that the budget furthers the Trump administration’s view of how HUD should operate. ‘The discretionary budget plan released today by President Trump aligns with Agency plans to provide rental assistance to low-income and vulnerable households and to help families achieve self-sufficiency,’ Carson said. ‘The budget also promotes fiscal responsibility at HUD by promoting better efficiencies and leveraging IT modernization,’ Carson continued. ‘I look forward to working with the President and remain keenly focused on HUD’s mission and core values.’” [HousingWire, [3/16/17](#)]

Carson Touted The Success Of A HUD Program That Trump’s Budget Cut In Its Entirety

Carson Praised The Success Of The Motor City Match Program. According to CNBC, “Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Ben Carson was not in Washington, D.C., today defending his administration’s new budget proposal. Instead, he was touting a program that President Donald Trump’s budget aims to obliterate. Carson was in Detroit, listening to citizens and visiting the city’s HUD field office. He stopped for lunch at a restaurant funded by Motor City Match and tweeted that the program ‘is a wonderful example of community revitalization at work.’” [CNBC, [3/16/17](#)]

The Motor City Match Program Was Completely Cut In The Budget Proposal That Carson Approved. According to CNBC, “Motor City Match is a program that pairs businesses in Detroit with available real estate options. It helps businesses locate and thrive in Detroit by providing competitive grants, loans and counseling to building owners and business owners, according to its website. Motor City Match is run by the city but funded in part by HUD’s Community Development Block Grant program — the \$3 billion program that the Trump administration’s FY 2018 budget cuts entirely.” [CNBC, [3/16/17](#)]

Carson Confused Real Estate Owned Properties (REOs) With Oreo Cookies During Congressional Testimony

CARSON CONFUSED REAL ESTATE OWNED PROPERTIES (REOs) WITH OREO COOKIES DURING CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY

When Rep. Porter Asked Carson About REOs He Confused The Term With Oreo Cookies And Could Not Answer What The Term Stood For. According to CNN, “During the May testimony, Porter said to Carson: ‘I’d also like you to get back to me if you don’t mind to explain the disparity in REO rates. Do you know what an REO is?’ Carson replied, ‘An Oreo?’ ‘No, not an Oreo’ Porter said. ‘An R-E-O. REO.’ Carson responded, ‘Real estate ...’ before pausing. Porter asked, ‘what’s the O stand for?’ to which Carson answered: ‘Organization.’ Porter replied, ‘Owned, real estate owned. That’s what happens when a property goes to foreclosure, we call it an R-E-O.’” [CNN, [6/5/19](#)]