

Scott Turner says HUD is failing its mission and outlines plan for more housing

Picked to lead HUD, the former Texas House member tells senators there is a housing crisis. Democrats question whether any plans will succeed without more spending.

BY KATHARINE WILSON JAN. 16, 2025 4 PM CENTRAL

SHARE REPUBLISH ↗



Former Texas state Rep. Scott Turner, chosen to head Housing and Urban Affairs in the second Trump Administration, spoke at a policy forum in Washington in 2022. © Oliver Contreras/Sipa USA via REUTERS

WASHINGTON – Former Texas state Rep. Scott Turner, picked by president-elect Donald Trump to lead the Department of Housing and Urban Development, told a Senate confirmation hearing on Thursday that the department is failing “its most basic mission.”

Appearing before the Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs, Turner said: “HUD’s mission is to create strong and sustainable communities and support quality affordable housing serving the most vulnerable of our nation. Yet, as we sit here, we have a housing crisis in our country.”

After Trump formally nominates Turner, which he can do once he is inaugurated on Monday, the committee and the Senate will vote on Turner’s confirmation.

Turner served as a Texas state representative from 2013 to 2017 representing Rockwall and Collin Counties. He ran for the Texas House speakership, but lost to incumbent Speaker Joe Straus, and then announced he would not seek reelection.

Before his political career, Turner played nine seasons in the NFL for the then-Washington Redskins, the San Diego Chargers and the Denver Broncos. After leaving the Texas House, Turner directed a council in the first Trump administration that led an investment program in low-income areas.

Turner voted against affordable housing bills in the Texas House and has called welfare “dangerous.”

If confirmed, Turner would lead the agency responsible for addressing a range of housing issues including affordable housing, homelessness and community building.

Senators from both parties agreed with Turner throughout the hearing that the United States is in a housing crisis. The U.S. had a housing shortage of about 5 million units in 2023. Home prices have increased – by one estimate 48% nationally since 2019 – and homelessness rose by 18% from 2023 to 2024.

“Scott Turner is the solution we are looking for,” Committee Chair Tim Scott, R-South Carolina, said.

But Turner’s ability to lead the department in addressing these issues may be limited by the incoming administration’s promise to cut government spending.

In questioning, Turner appeared unwilling to support more federal investment into programs to lower the cost of affordable housing construction. Turner argued that the department’s budget of about \$70 billion was already high, and that instead of more investments he supports “maximizing the budget.”

“I have to say that gives me a real pause,” said ranking member Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Massachusetts. “What I’m looking for is a commitment that we’re at least going to look, try, to get some more help to the state and local communities that are trying to build affordable housing.”

Turner laid out his strategy to incentivize more housing development – and in-turn lower housing costs – that included loosening regulations on a federal, state and local level. He argued that fees and zoning requirements limit the creation of affordable housing units.

Turner also said the costs of construction materials can be lowered by getting the “fiscal house in order.” He also supports expanding the opportunity zone initiative, a program he worked on in the first Trump administration as the director of the White House Opportunity and Revitalization Council, which provides tax benefits for investors in low-income areas to encourage development.

Sen. Scott, who was a key writer for the opportunity zone part of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, praised the program.

But Sen. Mark Warner, D-Virginia, said the program should be updated to focus more on small business development. The program is up for renewal in 2026.

Turner did not clearly answer a question from Sen. Angela Alsobrooks, D-Maryland, about any plans to replace those in career leadership roles with political appointees within the department and another about if he supports firing 75% of government employees.

“I do plan on looking at the team at HUD to see who and what we have, and making sure that we have the best team in place to carry out the mission of HUD,” Turner said.

He said he plans to make an inventory of the department’s programs and policies to remove anything that is getting in the way of department goals.

Throughout the hearing, Turner emphasized his own experiences – including having a family member experiencing homelessness, having divorced parents and rising from adversity – as reasons why he would be effective in this role.

“These aren’t just things that I’ve heard about,” Turner said “These are things that my family and I have experienced through the years.”