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Clergy rally in D.C. for homeowner protections

By Ashley Gipson, Religion News Service

WASHINGTON — Clergy and congregants from more than 40 states gathered in front of the Department of Treasury on Tuesday to pray for Secretary Henry Paulson and members of Congress to put an end to the home foreclosure crisis.

PICO, a network of faith-based community organizations that helps provide affordable housing, is demanding that the Treasury require all banks receiving a chunk of the federal bailout package to adopt systematic loan modifications that could keep 2 million people from losing their homes, they said.

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"We want them to look at the bigger picture. Don't just look at Wall Street, look at Main Street. Look at the man next door who is working hard and really paying taxes," said Marvin Webb, the assistant pastor of Periel Full Gospel Baptist Church in El Sobrante, Calif. "We are asking the secretary and Congress to keep people in their homes."

Representatives from cities where the foreclosure crisis has hit the hardest held signs displaying the number of people facing foreclosures, while people who have lost their homes gave their personal accounts. Webb prayed between each testimony.

"Remove the veil between the people of this nation and the people in authority. Pierce the veil of Secretary Paulson and Congress and move in their hearts today," Webb prayed, while the crowd shouted, "Wake up! Wake up, Secretary Paulson!"

In the coming weeks, PICO will hold public negotiations with officials in cities where foreclosure numbers are high. They plan to meet with House Financial Services Committee Chairman Barney Frank and Senior Obama transition officials to ask for their help in keeping people in their homes.

Demonstrators delivered a letter signed by more than 500 clergy to Paulson, asking him to end the foreclosure crisis.

"We want them to see the faces of people who are distressed. We want them to take the power they have and adjust loans and mortgages so people can stay in their houses" Webb said.

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http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2008-11-18-clergy-treasury_N.htm

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