



A Union of Professionals

Ben Carson—Secretary of Housing and Urban Development

Professor emeritus of neurosurgery at Johns Hopkins University, Ben Carson is a retired pediatric neurosurgeon and was a 2016 Republican presidential candidate. He has little policy experience with housing. The “Issues” page of Carson’s 2016 presidential campaign website did not include a section on housing and urban development, and his own business manager has previously questioned whether he is qualified to lead a federal agency.

If confirmed, Carson will be assuming control of the Department of Housing and Urban Development on the heels of Donald Trump’s controversial political campaign—much of which was spent maligning the nation’s cities.¹ Further, as many have pointed out, Trump’s campaign remarks about inner cities seemed to be racist dog whistles.^{2,3} Against this backdrop, Carson’s comments criticizing HUD initiatives that seek to reduce segregation have many city mayors and housing policy experts worried.⁴

UNQUALIFIED TO RUN HUD:

- A number of outlets and individuals have already raised concerns about Carson’s qualifications.
 - › The *New York Times* warned that Trump’s selection of Carson as HUD secretary has created “high anxiety” for city mayors and housing policy experts.⁵
 - › House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) called Carson a “disconcerting and disturbingly unqualified choice” for HUD secretary.⁶
 - › People for the American Way called Carson “dangerously unfit” for the assignment.⁷
- In November, Carson declared that he was not seeking a role in the Trump administration. Following this announcement, Carson’s business manager told *The Hill*, “Dr. Carson feels he has no government experience; he’s never run a federal agency. The last thing he would want to do was take a position that could cripple the presidency.”⁸

LACKS EXPERIENCE WITH FEDERAL HOUSING POLICY:

Carson compared HUD’s efforts to reduce housing segregation to “failed socialism”: In an op-ed for the *Washington Times*, Carson criticized the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule, implemented by Obama’s HUD.⁹ The rule makes federal housing payments contingent upon having a strategy to make housing more accessible. Carson likened the rule to socialism and “social engineering.”

Carson’s only experience in real estate involves real estate deals with a troubled business associate: According to a *Mother Jones* investigation, much of Carson’s personal wealth is tied up in real estate investments facilitated by his close friend Al Costa. Costa is a former dentist who pled guilty in 2007 to charges of healthcare fraud.¹⁰

Carson called housing subsidies “false compassion”: In 2015, Carson called government housing subsidies and other social programs false compassion, and argued that they make recipients dependent on the government.¹¹

DOESN’T UNDERSTAND STRUCTURAL POVERTY AND THE BARRIERS IT CREATES, AND HAS OPPOSED USING GOVERNMENT AID TO ERADICATE POVERTY:

- Carson told the *Weekly Standard* that Martin Luther King Jr. was a political conservative, and opined that “he would’ve

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been appalled if he were here today, to see all these people just sitting around, waiting for housing subsidies and for food stamps and for free healthcare.”¹²

- In his book *America the Beautiful*, Carson claimed that government anti-poverty initiatives were a “wasteful duplication” of charity work done to alleviate poverty.¹³
- Despite growing up in poverty, Carson has said that “poverty was really more of a choice than anything else, and it just really depended on how hard I wanted to work.”¹⁴

¹ <http://nymag.com/scienceofus/2016/10/why-trump-saying-inner-cities-is-racist-and-wrong.html>

² <http://fusion.net/story/355910/trump-inner-city-debate/>

³ <http://nymag.com/scienceofus/2016/10/why-trump-saying-inner-cities-is-racist-and-wrong.html>

⁴ <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/23/upshot/how-ben-carson-at-housing-could-undo-a-desegregation-effort.html>

⁵ <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/05/us/ben-carson-grew-up-in-public-housing-but-critics-worry-over-how-he-will-lead-it.html>

⁶ <http://www.democraticleader.gov/newsroom/12516/>

⁷ <http://www.pfaw.org/press-releases/2016/12/pfaw-statement-selection-ben-carson-secretary-department-housing-and-urban-de>

⁸ <http://www.businessinsider.com/ben-carson-donald-trump-administration-2016-11>

⁹ <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/jul/23/ben-carson-obamas-housing-rules-try-to-accomplish-/>

¹⁰ <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/2504848-dojobjectiontosentencing.html>

¹¹ <http://www.gainesvilletimes.com/archives/112726/>

¹² <http://www.weeklystandard.com/ben-carson-moves-toward-presidential-run/article/792757>

¹³ <http://www.mediamatters.org/research/2016/12/05/trump-picks-former-fox-news-contributor-ben-carson-serve-secretary-housing-and-urban-development/214713>

¹⁴ http://www.salon.com/2015/11/09/poverty_was_really_more_a_choice_ben_carson_grew_up_in_dire_poverty_hates_nothing_more_than_poverty_and_really_wants_you_to_know