



## OFFICE OF CONGRESSMAN JOSEPH CROWLEY (NY-07)

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### **Help for America's Homeowners** *The Obama Administration's Home Affordable Refinance Program (HARP)*

If you're not behind on your mortgage payments, but have not been able to refinance your mortgage because the value of your home has declined, you may be eligible to refinance your mortgage through President Obama's revised Home Affordable Refinance Program (HARP). HARP is designed to help you secure a new, more affordable, and more stable mortgage. HARP refinance loans require a loan application and underwriting process, and please note that refinance fees will apply.

The HARP refinancing program is different than the home loan modification program (HAMP), which is aimed at homeowners who cannot afford to pay their mortgages and are facing foreclosure. Below, please find details on HARP.

#### **How HARP Can Help You**

- Allows homeowners who cannot refinance their home through the traditional process to still take advantage of today's historically low mortgage interest rates
- Eliminates any Loan to Value Ratio (LTV) limits, which will benefit homeowners whose outstanding mortgages exceed the value of their home
- Reduces appraisal and underwriting requirements, eliminating costly paperwork and timely reviews that slow down the refinancing process and discourage banks from refinancing all but the safest borrowers
- Lowers loan fees for borrowers
- Waives loan fees for borrowers who reduce their loan term (i.e. if you refinance from a 30-year to a 15-year mortgage)

#### **Eligibility Conditions for HARP**

You may be eligible for HARP if you meet all of the following criteria:

- The borrower must be current on the previous six mortgage payments and not more than 30 days late in the past 12 months
- The mortgage must be for the homeowner's primary residence (where you reside the majority of the year). Second homes, vacation homes or investment properties are NOT eligible
- The program is open only to homeowners whose mortgage is guaranteed by *either* Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac and was guaranteed prior to June 1, 2009. To find out if Fannie Mae *or* Freddie Mac guarantee your home mortgage, please visit [www.makinghomeaffordable.gov](http://www.makinghomeaffordable.gov) and go to the "Tools" section to determine if either Fannie or Freddie owns your loan. Be sure to check links for *both* Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. If your home is guaranteed by Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac, you should call your mortgage servicer (the company where you send your mortgage payment) to verify the date they guaranteed your home loan

\*Eligibility conditions are for guidance only. Contact your mortgage servicer (the company where you send your mortgage payment) to confirm if you are eligible for HARP.

### **How to Participate in HARP**

- Contact your mortgage servicer (the company where you send your mortgage payment) and tell them you believe you're eligible for HARP, and see if they can help you refinance
- If they can't assist you, as some banks are not members of this voluntary program, you should contact the Homeowners HOPE Hotline at 1-888-995-HOPE (4673), and let them know that you may be eligible for HARP, but that your current servicer is not a member of the program. The HOPE housing counselors may still be able to assist you in exploring other options that may be available to you on your mortgage
- The deadline for participation in this program is December 31, 2013

### **Not Eligible? Help May Still Be Available**

If you do not meet the eligibility conditions for HARP, other refinancing options may be available to you. Contact your mortgage servicer and/or call the Homeowners HOPE Hotline at 1-888-995-HOPE (4673).

### **Additional Help**

If you have other questions about your mortgage or concerns about your ability to make payments, contact your mortgage servicer as a first step. You can also call the Homeowners HOPE Hotline at 1-888-995-HOPE (4673) and speak to a trained housing counselor with a government-approved, non-profit counseling agency.

### **Beware of Scams**

The Homeowners HOPE Hotline and HARP will not charge you for assistance. The Better Business Bureau offers the following tips for homeowners seeking mortgage assistance to avoid predatory scams:

- Call your bank or mortgage servicer before going to a third party company or organization.
- Beware of any company that promises to help you modify your mortgage in return for an advance fee. As of Jan. 31, this business practice is illegal, except under certain circumstances.
- Beware of any company asking you to pay for a forensic loan audit. These audits may not help you reduce your loan rates or mortgage payments.
- Before sending any money or signing a contract, check BBB Business Reviews at [www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org).

If you believe you have been the victim of a scam, you should file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) via [www.ftccomplaintassistant.gov](http://www.ftccomplaintassistant.gov) or by calling 877-FTC-HELP (877-382-4357).

### **For More Information on the HARP Refinancing Program:**

Please feel free to visit the official website of the Obama Administration's revised Home Affordable Refinance Program (HARP) at [www.makinghomeaffordable.gov](http://www.makinghomeaffordable.gov). Or, please feel free to contact my office at 202-225-3965.