



National Fuel Funds Network

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Dear Member: Deteriorating economic conditions, high home energy costs and lingering winter weather continue to squeeze the wallets of many Americans. In some states, LIHEAP programs have been extended, and in others, the end of utility cut-off moratoria has been delayed.

Please let us know what is going on in your area. The information you supply to us is very useful as we prepare to support increased funding for LIHEAP. Please call, email or fax us with any information you feel would be useful.

2008 National Energy and Utility Affordability Conference

Denver, CO. June 16 – 18

The NFFN and the NLIEC have set up a website for on-line registration for this exciting conference. Just click on this link to learn more about the conference and to register www.energyandutilityconference.org.

NFFN is now accepting awards' nominations, scholarship applications and Media Fair entries, along with your generous donations for the NFFN Silent Auction and conference Raffle. NFFN members should visit the NFFN website – www.nationalfuelfunds.org – for special members only information about the conference.

State Government Actions

- The Pennsylvania Department of Welfare's decision to end its LIHEAP program on March 21 instead of in early April, despite having \$13 million in funds available for aid, touched off a firestorm of criticism throughout the state.

State officials said they were closing the program early in order to ensure that the state would have funds available when the heating season begins this fall. The officials said they were concerned that the program may receive fewer funds from the federal government for the next fiscal year or that funding may be delayed.

Supporters of the program questioned the decision by pointing out that moratoria on utility cut-offs expired March 31, and there may be many households who could use the funds to keep their utility service. A study by the Pennsylvania Gas Association claimed that 62,000 households would go without assistance because of the early closure of the program.

- In Ohio, the state government extended deadline for applying for energy assistance to April 30 in order to make assistance available for residents seeking aid after the utility cut-off moratorium expired on March 18. The program had been scheduled to close on March 31.
- The Texas Department of House and Community Affairs has created the Comprehensive Energy Assistance Group, which will provide eligible individuals with assistance to pay their electric bills during this year. The program will provide a variety of assistance and will be administered various organizations throughout the state.

Utility Actions

- The Constellation Energy Group, the parent company for Baltimore Gas and Electric, has agreed to refund \$187 million to its electric customers as part of a settlement reached with the state of Maryland. According to the terms of the settlement BGE customers will receive a one-time rebate of \$170 this year.

The settlement agreement, which was approved by the Maryland legislature on the final day of its session, ends a dispute that had been going on since the company sought a 72 percent electricity rate increase in 2006.

The deal also spares ratepayers the obligation to pay up to \$1.5 billion in the next few decades for the eventual dismantling of nuclear power plants in Southern Maryland. The settlement also guarantees \$346 million in rate credits that were the subject of dueling lawsuits by Constellation and the state.

- In Iowa, utilities have voluntarily extended the winter heating moratorium until April 14. The moratorium was scheduled to end April 1. Alliant Energy (Interstate Power & Light Co.), Aquila, and MidAmerican Energy joined in extending the deadline.

The state senate had passed a resolution urging the extension of moratorium because of the large numbers of households behind on their utility bills and the continuing harsh winter weather.

- TXU Energy marked the 25th anniversary of its Energy Aid program in March with an operational workshop and reception at which the original Energy Aid partners were recognized with a special award. In addition, Texas Governor Rick Perry signed a resolution honoring the program for its unprecedented service to its customers throughout the state.

The largest bill payment assistance program among electric companies in the country, TXU Energy Aid has contributed more than \$45 million while helping more than 320,000 households with their electric bills since 1983.

LIHEAP

- A group of 46 Senators have written to the Chairman and the Ranking member of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education and Related Agencies urging them to provide \$5.1 billion in funding for LIHEAP for FY 2009.

Congressional Actions

- Sens. Olympia Snowe (R-ME) and Jack Reed (D-RI) have written to the American Petroleum Institute (API) asking its members to reconsider creating an assistance program that would be funded by the group's members to help consumers cope with rising energy costs. The API is the main trade group for major oil companies.

The letter was written as representatives of the five largest oil companies testified before a Congressional committee about their record \$123 billion in profits last year.

The Senators made a similar request in 2005 but were turned down. At that time, the API said it supported full funding for existing federal energy assistance programs and this time the organization responded that more money from Congress for the current programs is the best way to go.

- The House Committee on Small Business Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight this week held hearings on the impact of rising gasoline prices on small businesses.

Video of the testimony is available at
http://www.youtube.com/view_play_list?p=4D3130C3F51008F8.

Municipal Actions

- Residents in the town of Harpwell, ME have approved the creation of a fund designed to assist qualified local residents with meeting heating fuel costs. Voters at a town meeting approved \$10,000 to establish the fund and to accept gifts and grants for a reserve account.

The fund, which will be managed by the town government, will provide assistance to residents not eligible or currently receiving LIHEAP or assistance from any other program.

Tribal Actions

- The Nanticoke-Lenni Lenape Indians of New Jersey have been approved to receive a \$60,000 grant from the New Jersey LIHEAP program to provide assistance to Native American tribes in the southern portion of the state. The tribe will provide outreach and complete LIHEAP client intakes.

Reports and Studies

- Seven NFFN members have received a three or four star rating from the Charity Navigator, a national evaluator of charities. According to the organization, three and four star ratings indicate that the charity “spends donor dollars efficiently.”

Receiving four stars were Energy Outreach Colorado, the Fuel Fund of Maryland, Oregon Heat, Dollar Energy Fund, and The Heat and Warmth Fund. The Crisis Assistance Ministry and Operation Fuel received three stars.

The complete list can be viewed at
<http://www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm?bay=content.view&cpid=733>.

- Individuals and households making less than \$50,000 annually will pay 22 percent of their after tax income for energy, according to a study conducted by Americans for Balanced Energy Choices (ABEC). The report concluded that the

increased energy burden on these households, which number more than 60 million, was mainly due to increases in gasoline prices.

The complete study may be viewed at the ABEC website <http://www.americaspower.org/The-Facts/>.

Resources

- Audio and video transcripts from the Senate Subcommittee on Children and Families recent hearing on rising home heating costs and the importance of LIHEAP are available through the subcommittee's website -- http://www.help.senate.gov/Hearings/2008_03_05/2008_03_05.html.

Witnesses include Meg Powers, Senior Advisor, National Community Action Foundation; Dr. Deborah A. Frank, Professor of Pediatrics, Boston University School of Medicine; Robin Hussain, LIHEAP recipient from Hartford, CT; and Regina Surber, Director, Community Programs, Department of Human Services, Nashville, TN.

- *Fuel for Our Future*, an important assessment of the impacts of energy insecurity on children's health conducted by the Children's Sentinel Nutrition Assessment Program is available on the NFFN's website at www.nationalfuelfunds.org.