

Breaking news: The President requests \$1.7 billion in block grants and \$300 million in contingency funds for FY 2009, a 22% cut from the total FY 2008 level.

The Senate is scheduled to vote on the economic stimulus package on Wednesday. An amendment for substantial LIHEAP funding is likely.

Please watch your email for further developments.



National Fuel Funds Network

1010 Vermont Ave., NW, #718
Washington, DC 20005
202 824-0638 (fax), 202 824-0660 (phone)

info@nationalfuelfunds.org www.nationalfuelfunds.org

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Dear Member: The NFFN's 6th annual Washington Action Day for LIHEAP was by all measures a resounding success. More than 180 NFFN members and LIHEAP supporters came to Washington to take part in this day of grass roots lobbying for additional funds for the federal energy assistance program.

Our presence on Capitol Hill came as the Senate was beginning to mark up their version of the economic stimulus package and gave our members the opportunity to express support for including additional LIHEAP funding in the package.

NFFN estimates that Action Day participants visited more than 250 Congressional offices. In addition to supporting the inclusion of LIHEAP funding in the stimulus package, they urged additional funds for the program in the FY 2009 budget, the President's request for which was released today.

As the debate over the contents of the stimulus package moved forward, five Senators participated in a news conference where they expressed their plans and support for advancing an amendment to increase funding for the program. Speaking at the news conference were Senators Jack Reed (D-RI), Susan Collins (R-ME), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) and Mark Pryor (D-AR).

Also speaking at the news conference was Teresa Carver, a LIHEAP recipient from Van Buren, AR, who explained how assistance through LIHEAP had helped her. She

explained to the media how a series of unexpected events had left her and her daughter in desperate circumstances.

Ms. Carver told reporters how she had to pawn many of her possessions and still could not keep up with her utility bills and other expenses. Finally she applied for aid from LIHEAP and received a grant that allowed her to keep the power on in her home.

All Action Day activities didn't take place in Washington:

- In Arkansas, Governor Mike Beebe proclaimed January 30 "LIHEAP DAY 2008" and urged Arkansans to recognize "the work and worth of this necessary and humane program."
- In Nebraska, the Omaha-Council Bluffs metropolitan area kicked off LIHEAP Action Week, with a press conference at which Omaha Mayor Mike Fahey issued a proclamation making February 1 "Heartland Walk for Warmth Day"

The Omaha Public Power District, Aquila, and the Metropolitan Utilities District along with the United Way, the American Red Cross Heartland Chapter and the Salvation Army are conducting the fund raising event which will benefit energy assistance programs in the area.

(More details and photos from Washington Action Day for LIHEAP will be available soon on the NFFN website)

LIHEAP

- The full Senate is expected to take up the economic stimulus package on Wednesday, February 6, and LIHEAP supporters are expected to offer an amendment to include substantial additional LIHEAP funds in the package.

If the amendment is approved, then the House and Senate will have to meet to work out the differences between the two versions of the stimulus package. The House version contains no additional LIHEAP funds.

The NFFN will continue to monitor this situation and will keep you informed.

Utility Actions

- The Citizens Gas and Coke Utility contributed \$100,000 to help kick off the United Way of Central Indiana's Winter Assistance Fund drive. The fund provides aid to people whose income exceeds eligibility guidelines for federal assistance.

Indianapolis Power & Light and the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust contributed \$50,000 each to the fund raising drive, while The Indianapolis Foundation and the Indianapolis Colts each contributed \$10,000

- Xcel Energy Inc. announced that it will match customers' contributions to Energy Outreach Colorado dollar-for-dollar up to \$1 million this year. Xcel is based in Minneapolis, but it is Colorado's largest utility, serving about 1.3 million people.
- Fortuna Energy Inc. has donated \$45,000 to Catholic Charities in New York for their utility assistance program. The funds from the grant will go to programs in Steuben, Chemung, Schuyler and Tioga Counties.
- U.S. Energy Savings Corp. has made a \$25,000 donation to the Chicago area Salvation Army for the organization's energy assistance program. The program was begun in 1983 and serves more than 10,000 households annually.

Salvation Army officials said the donation would "allow for approximately 125 additional families to receive an extra month of heating."

State Government Actions

- The Maryland Office of Home Energy Programs along utilities and community service groups that service the Eastern Shore area of the state conducted an Energy Assistance and Community Awareness Fair to inform residents in the Salisbury area of available assistance programs and ways to reduce energy consumption.

Similar events were scheduled for Cambridge and Easton. Delmarva Power, the Choptank Electric Cooperative, Chesapeake Utilities, Delmarva Community Services and Shore Up! also participated in the event.

Municipal Actions

- The town of Lincoln, ME has contributed \$5,000 to start a fuel fund in this town with a population of slightly less than 3,000. The Town Council voted 5-0 to approve the program and provide limited funding. The Town Council is now seeking donations to the program for residents.

The program will be open to residents are ineligible for federal assistance and have less than a quarter tank of home heating oil or other energy source.

Reports and Studies

- In Oregon, LIHEAP can serve only about 24 percent of the total number of eligible households and over 9,000 households are on waiting lists for

assistance, according to a report from the Community Action Partnership of Oregon (CAPO).

The report, titled the *2008 Oregon Low-Income Energy Assistance Snapshot*, showed that heating oil and propane price have increased by about 30 percent from last winter while LIHEAP funding for the state was “roughly the same as in previous years.”

The complete report is available on the CAPO website at www.capo-oregon.org.