



## *National Fuel Funds Network*

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### **Energy Safety Net Bulletin #127**

Dear Member: LIHEAP supporters in Congress are working to provide additional funding for the federal energy assistance program before the start of the next fiscal year on October 1.

Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) has offered a bill, co-sponsored by 40 senators that would increase LIHEAP funding by \$2.53 billion in the current fiscal year, taking funding to \$5.1 billion. Half of the increased funding would be dedicated to the formula and the other 50 percent would be dedicated to the contingency program. 385 organizations companies have endorsed the bill in a joint letter to Senator Sanders. Thanks to NFFN members who joined this important effort.

The Sanders bill may come up for a vote as early as next week, but there have been some objections to the measure that may delay it.

Another possible source of additional LIHEAP funding for this fiscal year is a second economic stimulus bill. The Senate appropriations committee is scheduled to mark up a new stimulus bill next Tuesday, and there is support to include \$2.5 billion in funding for LIHEAP.

In the House, there are also plans for an economic stimulus bill, and a group of LIHEAP supporters are pressing for the inclusion of \$3.2 billion in funding for energy assistance in that measure.

The bills are not expected to be voted on until September, and President Bush said in a recent news conference that he does not believe that there is a need for another economic stimulus bill. So the prospect of a presidential veto hangs over these measures.

With slightly more than two months before the start of the next fiscal year and Congress scheduled to take August off, our sources on Capitol Hill have indicated that passage or

most of the conventional appropriations bills which fund government operations is unlikely. Government funding will be provided through the passage of a continuing resolution that will expire after the new Congress convenes next year.

Under the terms of the continuing resolution, LIHEAP would likely be funded at the same level as the current fiscal year, \$2.57 billion. There have been no indications as to whether LIHEAP supporters will attempt to increase the funding level in the continuing resolution.

NFFN will continue to monitor activity on Capitol Hill and will keep you informed.

### **State Government Actions**

- In Pennsylvania, Governor Edward Rendell signed legislation making available \$35 million for energy assistance and \$5 million to establish an energy efficiency loan fund through the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency. The funds are part of \$650 million fund designed to support investments in energy conservation and efficiency.
- Vermont lawmakers were scheduled to meet this week to discuss ways to supplement federal energy assistance funding in the state. Some government sources said the state may need to provide \$15 to \$20 million for the program this heating season.
- In Rhode Island, the Public Utilities Commission approved a 21.7 percent increase in electric rates and an 8 percent increase in natural gas rates charged by National Grid. According to a spokesperson for National Grid, monthly electricity bills should increase by \$16.67 and gas bills by \$9.60.
- In Plattsburgh, New York, the Governor's Economic Security Cabinet held a town meeting and heard from residents about their concerns over high home energy costs. NFFN chairperson Sue Montgomery Corey, president of the Community Power Network of New York State, told the cabinet members they should urge the governor to join the New England Governors in seeking full funding for LIHEAP.

Ms. Corey also said the governor should ask the legislature to join him in passing a state energy assistance program that can help the folks who are above the HEAP eligibility limits but who are still facing an energy crisis this winter and seek a waiver from the Department of Health and Human Services to allow New York's HEAP Program to pay back bills from last winter and allow households on automatic delivery and budget plans to get an emergency benefit.

### **Utility Actions**

- Oncur, a Texas based electric distribution and transmission company, has committed \$16 million over the next five years to fund a weatherization effort by the Texas Associations of Community Action Agencies. The Oncur investment will help weatherize a minimum of 3,000 low or fixed income resident's homes.
- The Central Vermont Public Services Corp. has begun fundraising for its Shareheat campaign five months earlier than usual and has pledged \$100,000 in matching funds for the program. The \$100,000 pledge is the largest in the 21 years the program has existed.

### **Fuel Fund Actions**

- The United Emergency Services Fund has received a \$1 million grant from the city of Philadelphia to provide assistance to eligible households that have had their service disconnected or are in imminent danger of termination. To be eligible for assistance, the applicant must have an income that is at or below 175 percent of the Federal Poverty Level.

### **Victorine Q. Adams Institute, Baltimore September 16-17, 2008**

- Registration is now open for NFFN's Victorine Q. Adams Institute. A team of NFFN members have developed an exciting program for the first-ever national gathering on charitable energy assistance fundraising. Day one will focus on current best practices in fundraising for energy assistance. Day two will develop a strategic fundraising vision for NFFN members and the Network, itself.

To register for the Institute and for the hotel, visit [www.nationalfuelfunds.org](http://www.nationalfuelfunds.org).