



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

September 5, 2008

Energy Safety Net Bulletin #129

Dear Member: Congress returns to work next week and is expected to approve a continuing resolution to fund the government into next year instead of trying to pass a series of separate appropriations bills before the fiscal year ends on September 30.

The movement of a continuing resolution will provide LIHEAP supporters with an opportunity to try to gain additional funds for the federal energy program for the current fiscal year. Senators Jack Reed and Susan Collins are circulating a letter asking that \$2.5 billion for LIHEAP be included in the continuing resolution.

At the most recent count, 31 Senators have signed the letter. They are Senators Reed (D-RI), Collins (R-ME), Baucus (D-MT), Biden (D-DE), Bingaman (D-NM), Cantwell (D-WA), Casey (D-PA), Clinton (D-NY), Coleman (R-MN), Dodd (D-CT), Kennedy (D-MA), Kerry (D-MA), Klobuchar (D-MN), Leahy (D-VT), Levin (D-MI), Lieberman (I-CT), Lugar (R-IN), Menendez (D-NJ), Murkowski (R-AK), Murray (D-WA), Obama (D-IL), Rockefeller (D-WV), Salazar (D-CO), Sanders (I-VT), Schumer (D-NY), Smith (R-OR), Snowe (R-ME), Specter (R-PA), Stabenow (D-MI), Sununu (R-NH) and Whitehouse (D-RI).

Sens. Reed and Collins have set Monday, September 8 as the closing date for signatures on the letter. If your senator has not yet signed the letter, please contact them and ask her or him to support the effort.

Congress may also act on a second economic stimulus act, which would include additional LIHEAP funding. NFFN will keep you informed.

Victorine Q. Adams Institute

- On-line registration is still available for NFFN's Victorine Q. Adams Institute which will be held September 16 and 17 at the Tremont Plaza Hotel in Baltimore,

MD. The Institute is a first of its kind forum on fundraising for charitable energy assistance.

Don't miss out on this learning opportunity. Visit the NFFN website at www.nationalfuelfunds.org, and click on the Adams Institute for more information and registration details.

Fuel Fund Activities

- Operation Fuel in Connecticut is gearing up to open an expanded assistance program thanks to a boost in funding from the state government. Operation Fuel Executive Director Pat Wrice said the state-wide fuel fund had received \$14 million from the state to provide assistance to a broader range of residents in need.

Under the terms of legislation recently signed by Gov. Rell, Operation Fuel received \$8.5 million for its mission of providing aid to low income residents and \$5 million to provide assistance to middle-income residents. The program also received \$500,000 for administrative purposes.

Wrice said she is working to increase the agency's staff in preparation for the start of the program on November 1.

- Ocean Bank in Kennebunk, ME has donated \$2,000 to the Maine Housing Authority and the York County Community Action Corporation to help provide fuel assistance for low income families in the area.

Jo-Ann Choate, Maine Housing Authority energy programs manager, said "Ocean Bank's generous contribution makes it possible...to provide fuel assistance for those families in Kennebunk that have to decide between putting food on their table or heating their home this coming winter."

2009 National Energy and Utility Affordability Conference

- Planning for the 2009 National Energy and Utility Affordability Conference will begin on September 23 in Portland, Oregon. Representative of northwest area and national organizations and companies will convene to sketch out conference themes, and to suggest topics for coverage and possible speakers and workshops. NFFN members may contribute ideas and suggestions to this discussion by emailing them to NFFN Executive Director George Coling, coling@nationalfuelfunds.org.

The national conference will be at the Portland DoubleTree at Lloyd Center. Please visit www.energyandutilityconference.org for regular updates between now and the conference and to see a report on the 2008 conference in Denver.

State Government Actions

- Maine Governor John Baldacci has ordered the reallocation of \$12.6 million in state funds to provide additional money for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program and the state's weatherization program.

The governor's office said the plan will increase the size of the average benefit to \$500 and make it possible for recipients to purchase at least 100 gallons of home heating oil. Many oil companies require a minimum purchase of 100 gallons. Previously the average grant was \$415.

The state's weatherization program will receive a \$2 million increase and an additional \$1 million to be used to repair and fine-tune homes that are LIHEAP eligible.

The funds were made available by pooling money from Maine Housing, the state Public Utilities Commission, the Department of Transportation, the Department of Administrative and Financial Services and restructured Community Development Block Grants.

Additionally, the Maine Public Utilities Commission has approved a 13 percent increase in assistance available to electricity consumers. Commission Chairperson Sharon Reishus said "the addition funding was an attempt to keep up with rising utility rates."

- Louisiana Senator Mary Landrieu, in the wake of Hurricane Gustav has asked President Bush to release all remaining LIHEAP emergency funds. The Senator said "Gustav's strike has exacerbated already difficult economic conditions. Due to rising energy prices, virtually all of our current LIHEAP funds have been spent. Unfortunately, the energy needs of our citizens outstrip the State's capacity to help. As you demonstrated in the aftermath of the 2005 hurricanes, Department of Energy resources and LIHEAP contingency funds can make a difference in disaster recovery."
- Just days before the state was hit by Hurricane Gustav, Governor Bobby Jindal shuffled state funds in order to make \$10 million available to supplement LIHEAP and the federal weatherization program. Each program will receive \$5 million.

The funds will come from the Petroleum Violation Escrow, a fund of court settlements dating back to the 1980's for violations that oil companies paid to the

federal government. The federal government distributed the money to the states and Louisiana has used the funds for other energy conservation measures.

- Also the Louisiana Public Service Commission declared an “energy emergency” that will allow certain low income electricity customers to put off paying increases in their monthly bills for up to a year.

Under the terms of the emergency declaration, the low income elderly, people whose only income is Social Security, people receiving food stamps, people who receive federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families payments and people with life-sustaining medical equipment at home can use one of three options to defer their payments.

Eligible customers can choose to set their own due date for their bill to ease cash flow problems, use automatic monthly payments or select a “levelized billing plan spreading out monthly payments to an average of the past 12 months.

Conferences and Meetings

- Attendees at the National Clean Energy Summit recommended the full funding and expansion of LIHEAP, the low income weatherization program and the Energy and Environmental Block Grant program.

The summit hosted by Senator Harry Reid, the Center for American Progress Action Fund, and the University of Nevada-Las Vegas was held in Las Vegas August 18 and 19 and drew a wide range of energy experts and government policy makers.

More information on the summit, including presentations and videos of featured speakers can be found at <http://www.cleanenergysummit.org>.