



## *National Fuel Funds Network*

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### **Energy Safety Net Bulletin #102**

Dear Member: We are only five weeks away from NFFN's fifth annual **Washington Action Day for LIHEAP**, the largest and most important grassroots lobbying effort on behalf of federally funded energy assistance.

On February 1, 2007, NFFN members and advocates for LIHEAP will gather in Washington to urge the Congress to provide adequate funding for the assistance program. The NFFN and other LIHEAP supporters are asking legislators to fund LIHEAP at its authorized level of \$5.1 billion for FY 2008.

For the current fiscal year, LIHEAP is being funded through a continuing resolution that provides \$2 billion for the program. The continuing resolution is set to expire February 17, and the leaders of the new Congress have indicated that they will pass an omnibus spending bill to fund LIHEAP and several other government agencies and programs for the rest of the fiscal year.

Since Congress may not complete action on the omnibus spending bill before Washington Action Day it makes it even more important for our members make an effort to come to Washington for the event.

For more information about Washington Action Day for LIHEAP and to register for the event please visit our website – [www.nationalfuelfunds.org](http://www.nationalfuelfunds.org).

#### **Fuel Fund Actions**

- The Arizona Community Action Association (ACAA) has entered into a three-year contract with the state's Department of Economic Security to establish a statewide fuel fund. The program will provide \$2.3 million in matching funds to be distributed to needy families throughout the state. The ACAA will also receive start-up administrative funds, which will cover staff and operations.

Jeff Jameson, who formerly worked with the \$1 Energy Fund, Inc., will direct the program, and ACAA Executive Director Cynthia Zwick will provide strategic oversight. The program is expected to begin providing assistance by late summer 2007.

- The Keep Our Neighbors Warm Fund has been continued for a second year. The fund, which provides assistance to residents of Dubuque, Delaware, and Jackson Counties in Iowa, raised \$107,327 last year. Operation: New View Community Action Agency administers the program.
- The Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks and the Ohio Department of Development, Office of Community Services will conduct a 2007 Heat and Eat Summit on January 17 in the Capitol Atrium at the Statehouse from 10:30 am - 2:30 pm

The summit will provide an opportunity to learn about the Home Energy Assistance Program, the expanded income eligibility guidelines for assistance, and other programs available to help Ohioans meet their most basic needs.

### **State Government**

- In testimony before the Connecticut Legislature's energy committee, Operation Fuel Executive Director Pat Wrice said many low income people are forced to "triage their energy budgets" by keeping their electricity shut off between May and November 1. She explained that people were taking these drastic measures as a way of managing skyrocketing energy costs.

Ms. Wrice suggested the state adopt discounted utility rates for the poor as several states have done. She also urged that forgiveness programs be expanded so people are not permanently burdened by increasing outstanding balances.

- The Illinois Commerce Commission has approved two programs that will allow Illinois consumers more options and greater flexibility in managing higher energy costs. One program allows customers to phase in 2007 rate increases over several years and the other allows residential customers access to hourly electricity pricing.

The rate stabilization program caps increases for 2007, 2008, and 2009 for participating consumers. Costs that exceed the cap would be deferred and charged to customers over the following three years, 2010 to 2012.

The real time pricing program, which is scheduled to begin registering participants in January, will offer an alternative to standard flat rate utility billing. Under the plan's hourly pricing structure, price information will be provided to

participating consumers, who will then have the opportunity to tailor their electricity usage to take advantage of lower priced time periods

### **Surveys and Reports**

- A comprehensive hunger study conducted by America's Second Harvest – The Nation's Food Bank Network has shown that 42 percent of households served by the organization's members were "forced to choose between buying groceries and paying for utilities or heating fuel."

The study also found that 52.4 percent of households with children have had to choose between buying food and paying for utilities and 30.89 percent of households with seniors had to make similar choices.

More information about this study and the organization can be found at [www.secondharvest.org](http://www.secondharvest.org).

- A statewide survey by the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission counted 19,745 households that were about to enter winter without service from the utility that ordinarily provides their gas or electricity. In Philadelphia, according to the survey, 9,300 households were poised to begin the winter without service from the Philadelphia Gas Works.

The survey also produced evidence of a link between utility shutoffs and home abandonment. Statewide, the survey identified 7,782 residences, nearly a third of them in Philadelphia, that were vacated this fall after utility service was cut off.

### **Federal Budget**

- The Coalition on Human Needs is collecting information to help the organization make its case for adequate human needs funding in the federal government's FY 2008 budget. To that end, it is seeking information that demonstrates how cuts to federal social service programs affect citizens.

If you have any stories or data that illustrate how program cuts would affect the people you serve please email them to [mdonahue@chn.org](mailto:mdonahue@chn.org).