



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: Participation in the fifth annual Washington Action Day for LIHEAP was the largest since the NFFN began organizing this important day of grassroots lobbying. One hundred forty five NFFN members and LIHEAP supporters visited the offices of Senators and Representatives on February 1st, urging them to support increased funding for the federal energy assistance program.

Action Day participants carried a two-fold message to legislators asking them to use every legislative opportunity to raise LIHEAP funding to \$3.2 billion for the current fiscal year and to support increasing funding for the program to \$5.1 billion for FY 2008.

This demonstration of grassroots support for LIHEAP was even more important this year because of the many new members elected to Congress last November and the change in control of the Congress from the Republicans to the Democrats.

With President Bush recommending a significant reduction in LIHEAP funding in his FY 2008 federal budget proposal and the possibility of LIHEAP funding for the current fiscal year being \$1 billion less than last year, it is important that we keep the pressure on the Congress to do the right thing.

NFFN will keep you informed as we look for opportunities to increase LIHEAP funding for this fiscal year and as the budget and appropriations process for the next fiscal year progresses. Your help will be very important to the survival of a viable federal energy assistance program.

LIHEAP

- President Bush, in his FY 08 budget proposal, has reduced funding for LIHEAP by 44 percent. The president's budget, which was released this week, calls for energy assistance funding to be set at \$1.782 billion (\$1.5 billion in regular grant funds and \$278 million in contingency funds).

Last week, the House approved legislation funding LIHEAP for the current fiscal year at \$2.161 billion (\$1.98 billion in regular grant funds and \$181 million in contingency funds). The Senate has not yet taken up the funding bill.

Several governors, including Connecticut Gov. Rell and Illinois Gov. Blagojevich, and many LIHEAP supporters including NFFN Chairperson Greg Sawyers have been critical of the President's proposal. Sawyers termed the President's budget as of "turning a cold shoulder....to America's most vulnerable families."

Mark Wolfe, executive director of the National Energy Assistance Directors Association (NEADA), said, "there is absolutely no justification for the President's cuts."

State Government Actions

- Arkansas Governor Mike Beebe has issued a proclamation making February Home Energy Assistance Month. In his proclamation, Gov. Beebe also called upon the state's Congressional delegation and the entire Congress to increase LIHEAP funding to its fully authorized level. The proclamation is available at http://governor.arkansas.gov/pdf/proclamations/0207_p10_liheap.pdf.
- The Missouri state House has voted to \$6.3 million to the Utilicare program, which helps people weatherize their homes and pay their utility bills. The state Senate is expected to take up the measure shortly.

In other action, the Senate Commerce Committee has begun considering a bill that would bar utility companies from shutting service when the temperature gets above 89 degrees.

- Governor Jennifer M. Granholm has proclaimed February as "Keep Michigan Warm Month", urging Michigan residents to donate to programs such as The Heat And Warmth Fund (THAW), a statewide program, as well as other programs in their own communities. "Keep Michigan Warm Month is an excellent opportunity for Michigan residents to come together to help keep our neighbors warm," the governor said.

To raise public awareness surrounding heating assistance options, as well as raise funds to assist low-income households who are in need of assistance with their energy bills, Michigan's THAW will be holding two Radiothons during February.

The Fourth Annual WWJ Newsradio 950 Winter Survival Radiothon for THAW is scheduled from 5 a.m. on Friday, Feb. 9 through 12 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 10 in Detroit. THAW is also partnering with Regent Communications to host the Second Annual WTRV-FM Winter Warmth Radiothon for THAW, Feb. 23-24, in Grand Rapids.

THAW and the Detroit Department of Human Services will hold the 3rd annual Heat the Streets 5K/10K run on February 9th. Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick, Grand Marshall of the event, will start the race at 8 am in front of the Boll Family YMCA. In addition, many Michigan Community Action Agencies will be sponsoring "Walk for Warmth" fundraisers throughout the state in February.

- In Iowa, utility service disconnections among middle-income households increased 117 percent so far this winter over last winter's total according to the state's latest energy assistance figures. Although Iowa moratorium laws protect low-income households from disconnections during winter months, energy utilities have disconnected 1,052 accounts so far this winter, according to Jerry McKim, who oversees the state's LIHEAP program.

Utility Actions

- Noble Energy has donated \$50,000 to Energy Outreach Colorado for energy assistance grants. The Houston-based oil and gas exploration and production company has in Colorado's Wattenberg Field.
- Puget Sound Energy will contribute \$95,000 to low-income heating assistance as part of an almost \$1 million settlement accepted by the state's Utilities and Transportation Commission. The settlement was the result of the utility being charged with violating consumer privacy laws by sharing customer's private information without the customers' written permission.

Washington Action Day for LIHEAP Media Coverage

- Below are links to newspaper articles and television coverage from around the country generated by NFFN's Washington Action Day for LIHEAP.

Jackson, MS

http://www.wlbt.com/global/video/popup/pop_player.asp?ClipID1=1215146&h1=Newsmaker%20interview%20--%20Entergy%20and%20Low-Income%20Energy%20Aid&vt1=v&at1=News&d1=316433&LaunchPageAdTag=News&activePage=info&playerVersion=1&hostPageUrl=http%3A/www.wlbt.com/Global/story.asp%3FS%3D6037113%26nav%3Dmenu119_3&rnd=63844517

<http://www.clarionledger.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID+/20070202/NEWS/702020356/1001/>

Little Rock, AR

<http://www.todaysthv.com/video/news/player.aspx?aid=39221&bw=>

<http://www.todaysthv.com/printfullstory.aspx?storyid=40880>

Norwich, CT

<http://www.norwichbulletin.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/220070130/NEWS01/701300327/>

Green Bay, WI

<http://www.thenorthwestern.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070131/GPG03/701310640/12>

Pittsburgh, PA

<http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/pp/07033/758762.stm>

Dallas, TX

<http://dallas.dbusinessnews.com/printnews.php?newsid=105893>