



National Fuel Funds Network

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Dear NFFN Member: Congress yesterday voted to extend stop-gap legislation currently funding government operations and programs until December 21 while Congressional Democrats worked on the details of an omnibus spending bill that would fund the government for the current fiscal year.

According to newspaper reports and Capitol Hill sources, Congressional leaders have agreed to set funding for FY 2008 at \$933 billion, the level requested by President Bush. Congress is now working out the details of the omnibus bill and plan to bring it to a vote next week.

Last month, President Bush vetoed a spending bill that would have funded LIHEAP at \$2.4 billion for this fiscal year, a \$250 million increase over the FY 2007 level. The House was unable to override the veto, and since then, Congressional leaders have been working on several plans to complete the funding bills.

Meanwhile, several Senators have introduced legislation that would provide an additional \$1 billion for LIHEAP this fiscal year while others have signed letters requesting that additional funding for LIHEAP be included in the pending appropriations bills. For more details on these initiatives, see **LIHEAP** below.

NFFN will continue to monitor the situation and keep you informed.

Action Alert

Next week Congress is scheduled to take up an omnibus spending bill for FY 2008 that may include increased funding for LIHEAP. We urge you to contact the members of your Congressional delegation and ask them to support any measures that increase funding for LIHEAP. Please include any anecdotes or documentation of need in your respective communities. Call 202-224-3121.

LIHEAP

- In the opening debate on the 2007 Farm Bill, Senator Judd Gregg introduced an amendment which would eliminate a new, mandatory \$5.1 billion five-year agriculture disaster trust fund, and instead provide nearly \$1 billion in Fiscal Year 2008 to LIHEAP. The remainder of the savings achieved by eliminating the trust fund, which totals more than \$4 billion, would be directed to reduce the national deficit. At press time, it is uncertain whether or not the Senate will vote on the amendment.

Senators John Sununu, Olympia Snowe, and Susan Collins cosponsored the amendment.

- The members of the Midwestern Governors Association have written to the Congressional leaders urging them to increase funding for LIHEAP for the current fiscal year. The governors cited increased home heating costs for the need for an additional \$1 billion for the program.

The letter was signed by Gov. Jim Doyle (WI), Gov. M. Michael Rounds (SD), Gov. Rod Blagojevich (IL), Gov. Chester Culver (IA), Gov. Mitch Daniels (IN), Gov. Jennifer Granholm (MI), Gov. John Hoeven (ND), Gov. Tim Pawlenty (MN), Gov. Kathleen Sebelius (KS), and Gov. Ted Strickland.

- A group of Republican Senators have written to the director of the Office of Management and Budget requesting a meeting to try to gain administration support for increased funding for LIHEAP for the current fiscal year.

Senators Olympia J. Snowe, Norm Coleman, Susan Collins, Judd Gregg, Gordon Smith, John Sununu and Ted Stevens wrote to OMB Director Jim Nussle requesting the meeting.

Fuel Fund Actions

- Operation Fuel has received \$5 million from the state government to help eligible Connecticut residents reduce their arrearages and to expand the programs assistance grants.

Pat Wrice, executive director of operation Fuel, said the state had provided \$2.5 million to help reduce arrearages, \$1.75 million to expand their assistance grants

and \$750,000 to improve the agency's infrastructure. Wrice said this was the largest grant the program had received from the state.

- John X. Miller has been named Chief Executive Officer of The Heat and Warmth Fund (THAW), Michigan's state-wide fuel fund. Before joining THAW, Miller was director of community affairs and vice president of Detroit Free Press Charities.

Miller succeeds ZeePamell Pace, who served as interim executive director since June of this year following the resignation of Kathleen Walgren. Ms. Pace will remain with THAW in a senior executive position.

Utility Actions

- TXU Energy raised \$274,000 for its Energy Aid program through employee contributions. The amount raised this year represented a 61 percent increase over last year when employees raised \$170,000 for the program. According to TXU Energy, 43 percent of its employees made contributions to the United Way/TXU Energy Aid campaign.
- Laclede Gas has announced its support for Missouri Governor Matt Blunt's plan to seek \$6.4 million in state funding for Utilicare, which provides heating assistance to state residents, and to re-direct \$5.2 million in federal funds to crisis energy assistance to help local agencies running out of LIHEAP funds.

Douglas Yeager, Chairman, President and CEO of Laclede, said "We believe that such funding is extremely helpful and will provide a valuable complement to our own existing programs for aiding customers who need assistance with their utility bills..."

The governor's plan calls for the \$6.4 million to be part of a supplemental budget proposal for the current fiscal year. The \$5.2 million in federal funds would be re-directed by the state's Department of Social Services.

- AmerenUE employees in St. Louis raised \$3,612 for Dollar More with an innovative new approach called "Decorating for Dollars." Employees provided items, including hand-made quilts and afghans that were raffled off to raise money for the fuel fund.

Forecasts and Reports

- Residential heating oil prices are projected to average \$3.23 per gallon this heating season, a 30-percent increase over the previous heating season, according to the latest Short Term Energy Outlook from the Energy Information

Administration (EIA). The EIA forecasts that expenditures for natural gas this winter should increase by about 7 percent.

- Nearly half of all home fires occur in December, January and February, according to a report by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). The report also showed that heating equipment is the leading cause of home fires.

According to the NFPA report, in 2005 heating equipment was involved in an estimated 62,200 reported home structure fires, 670 civilian deaths, 1,550 civilian injuries and \$909 million in direct property damage. The report is available at <http://www.nfpa.org/categoryList.asp?categoryID=291&URL=Research%20&%20Reports/Fact%20sheets/Heating%20equipment>

NFFN's Washington Action Day for LIHEAP is January 30, 2008. Please plan on coming to Washington for this signature lobbying event to increase LIHEAP funding and/or organize a local supporting event. Please visit <http://www.nationalfuelfunds.org/AdvocacyPublicPolicy/2008ActionDay.html> to register for Action Day and for the hotel and to learn how to organize a local supporting event.