



## National Fuel Funds Network

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### Energy Safety Net Bulletin #118

Dear Member: The sixth annual **Washington Action Day for LIHEAP** is January 30, and there is still time for you to be a part of this important day of lobbying on behalf of federal energy assistance. **Please register today.**

Hotel rooms are still available. For more information about hotel rooms and to register for this important event, visit the NFFN website at [www.nationalfuelfunds.org](http://www.nationalfuelfunds.org).

**Washington Action Day for LIHEAP** has become the largest single grassroots effort to gain increased funding for the federal energy assistance program. More than 100 NFFN members and LIHEAP supporters are expected to come to Washington to meet with more than 200 members of the House and Senate to seek their support in increasing the funding level for this vital program.

If you can't come to **Washington for Action Day**, please open the NFFN's Action Day Toolkit on our website for suggestions for activities you can conduct in your community.

**Washington Action Day** is your chance to let your congressional representatives know how important LIHEAP is in your community. Please take part either in Washington or at home.

#### LIHEAP

- Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders said he plans to introduce an amendment to provide an additional \$800 million for LIHEAP this fiscal year when the Senate returns from its Christmas recess on Wednesday. Sanders did not indicate to what legislation his amendment would be attached but promised "a marathon debate" over funding.
- On the day after Christmas, President Bush signed an omnibus spending bill that provided \$1.8 billion in regular program funding and \$ 590.3 million in emergency

contingency funding for LIHEAP for this fiscal year. While there was no increase in regular program funding over last year, the emergency funding was increased by \$409.1 million over 2007.

- The NFFN, the National Energy Assistance Directors Association, and the Coalition of Northeastern Governors have written letters to President Bush asking for the immediate release of LIHEAP contingency funds.

NFFN Chairperson Greg Sawyers wrote that “harsh winter weather and high home energy costs, especially in the Northeast where heating oil prices have increased by more than a dollar a gallon over last year, have created a dire situation for many elderly, disabled, and working poor Americans.”

### **Utility Actions**

- The Central Vermont Public Service Corp. (CVPS) has reached out to other Vermont businesses to contribute matching funds to the utility’s heating assistance program, Shareheat. CVPS shareholders contributed \$60,000 to the program this year as an incentive to customers to match those donations.

CVPS’s appeal to other businesses has raised an additional \$32,000 to make the matching level \$92,000. The Vermont Country Store donated \$10,000, the Vermont State Employees Credit Union and Omya Inc. each made \$7,500 donations, another local business made an anonymous \$5,000 donation and the Vermont Electric Power Co. gave \$2,000.

### **Fuel Fund Activities**

- In Maine, a combination of public and private foundations, businesses and other funders has committed \$521,000 to launch the Eastern Maine Energy Initiative to provide home weatherization, furnace maintenance and fuel assistance for five counties.

Half of the Initiative funds will be used for emergency fuel deliveries and the other half will be used for weatherization and furnace maintenance, according to the Maine Philanthropy Center, which coordinates the project. The United Way of Eastern Maine handles the administration and implementation of the project.

Contributions to the Initiative were made by the Maine Community Foundation, United Way of Eastern Maine, The Stephen and Tabitha King Foundation, Jasper Wyman & Son, Bangor Hydro-Electric Co., Bangor Savings Bank, the JTG Foundation, the Francis Hollis Brain Foundation, the Leonard C. & Mildred F. Ferguson Foundation, The Betterment Fund, C.F. Adams Charitable Trust,

Maine Health Access Foundation, Webber Energy, R.H. Foster Energy and an anonymous donor.

### **Energy Assistance Loans**

- In Massachusetts, the Fall River Municipal Credit Union has begun offering loans of up to \$1,000 to existing members to “help spread large heating bills into manageable payments,” according to the credit union’s website.

The loans must be paid back over a 10 month period. “The idea is to pay it off before next winter so they can (be debt-free) and start again,” said Lisa Reid, the credit union’s consumer lending manager. The loans are available only in December and January but could be extended through February if oil prices remain high according to Reid.

### **Job Opportunity**

- The Community and Economic Development Association (CEDA), the largest community action agency in Chicago, is seeking a Director for its Energy Conservation and LIHEAP Services program. Additional information is available at the CEDA website – [www.cedaorg.net/www2/JobListing\\_files/job144.html](http://www.cedaorg.net/www2/JobListing_files/job144.html).