



National Fuel Funds Network

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Member Letter

Dear NFFN Member: The Senate voted 63-28 Thursday to instruct conferees on the budget reconciliation bill to add \$2.92 billion in funding for LIHEAP to the measure. The House version of the reconciliation bill includes \$1 billion in funding for LIHEAP.

Instructions to conferees are not binding, and therefore only represent the sentiment of those supporting the instructions. House and Senate conferees are expected to meet very soon to work out a compromise version of the reconciliation bill before Congress adjourns.

The motion to instruct the conferees was offered by Sens. Reed, Collins, Kennedy and Snowe. If the Senate version is accepted and passed, total funding for LIHEAP could possibly increase to \$5.1 billion for FY 06. Congress has yet to complete passage of the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education appropriations bill but the House version of that legislation contains \$2.183 billion for LIHEAP. See below for a vote chart.

Meanwhile, Capitol Hill sources said that funding for LIHEAP may be added to the Defense appropriations bill because that legislation may be acted on sooner than the Labor, HHS, Education appropriations bill or the budget reconciliation bill.

State Government Actions

- The Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission has approved a rule that limits deposits for service to the no more than the average cost of two months service, regardless of the customer's credit history. The new rule also states that LIHEAP eligible customers can be charged no more than a two-month deposit during the winter heating season. The new rules must be approved by the state Attorney General and the Governor before it goes into effect.
- Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich convened a Keep Illinois Warm Leadership Summit that attracted leaders from nearly 50 businesses and organizations to discuss to involve the private sector in efforts to help families make it through this winter's home heating crisis.

As a result of the summit, the United Way of Illinois and the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce announced partnerships with the state government to identify and assist other businesses and social service organizations willing to commit resources to the Keep Illinois Warm Campaign.

- Pennsylvania Gov. Edward Rendell has established a new website to help Spanish-speaking Pennsylvanians, who need help paying their home energy bills. The website, www.SinFrioPA.com, provides contact information for those in need of help paying utility bills, gives tips on energy conservation, and has information on LIHEAP and other energy saving information.

In addition, the Governor has established a toll-free telephone number where residents can get immediate information about restoring utility service, paying their heating bills, fixing residential heating systems and locating available shelters. The number is 866-550-4355.

- The Iowa Department of Human Rights has filed a “Petition for Rulemaking and Related Relief” with the Iowa State Department of Public Health asking that the Department of Health assert jurisdiction over utility shutoffs to Iowa households with children on public health jurisdictional grounds.

The proposed rules would require a utility to obtain a “finding of no public health or safety risk” from the State Department of Public Health before disconnecting utility service to a home in which children under the age of 18 live. The rules also state that “the disconnection of home energy service to a dwelling where a child age 12 years or younger resides is deemed to endanger human health, life or safety.”

- Colorado Gov. Bill Owens is featured in public service announcements promoting donations to Energy Outreach Colorado and encouraging families to apply for LIHEAP. The 15 and 30 second psas were produced by television station 9News, a local NBC affiliate. The announcements will soon be viewable at the NFFN’s website – www.nationalfuelfunds.org.
- Republican and Democratic members of the Michigan state legislature have proposed separate legislative packages designed to help residents of the state deal with the current home energy crisis.

The package of bills offered by House Republicans will expand eligibility for the Home Heating Credit from 110 percent of the poverty level to 130 percent, provide a weatherization income tax credit for low income people and a credit for purchasing certain energy efficient appliances, and provide sales tax exemptions for purchasing energy efficient appliances and products used to winterize the home.

In addition, the legislation, called the Home Energy Assistance and Tax Relief (HEAT) package, would create a Home Heating Credit Fund to supplement LIHEAP. Funding for the credit would come from capturing increased revenues from the Oil & Gas Severance Tax.

Democrats in the Michigan House and Senate have proposed legislation that would ban utility companies from shutting off service during the winter, provide additional funding for energy assistance funds, expand LIHEAP eligibility from 110 percent of the poverty level to 125 percent, and provide tax credits to low income households who install energy efficient appliances and winterize their homes, allow tax filers to make donations to an energy fund.

The legislation would also grant the Michigan Public Service Commission the power to shift \$5 million from research into a fund to help people pay heating bills and create a database to coordinate volunteers willing to help with winterization efforts.

Utility Actions

- Chattanooga Gas has distributed energy assistance grants totaling \$50,000 to two city departments of human services in Tennessee. The Department of Human Services in Chattanooga received \$45,000 and the Department of human Services in Cleveland received \$5,000. The funds will be used to help low-income elderly residents with the utility bills.
- Washington Gas has donated \$100,000 to the Washington Area Fuel Fund (WAFF). WAFF was created in 1983 by Washington Gas and is administered by the Salvation Army. The fund provides energy assistance grants to households in need in Washington and the nearby Maryland and Virginia suburbs.

Fuel Fund Actions

- Academy Award winning actor Denzel Washington has donated \$25,000 to Winter Assistance Rocky Mount (WARM), a charitably funded energy assistance program in Rocky Mount, NC. The donation was the largest single donation in the 19-year history of the program.

Rocky Mount, NC is the hometown of Herman Boone a former high school football coach, who Washington portrayed in the film "Remember the Titans." Boone has been involved with WARM for about three years and a spokesman for Washington said the actor "was thrilled to help his friend."

Reports and Studies

- The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities has released a report criticizing the idea of adding funding for LIHEAP to budget reconciliation legislation. While supporting increased funding for the program, the Center calls the budget bill “an inappropriate vehicle” because it would “very likely entail a damaging trade off – additional permanent cuts to other types of assistance for low-income families and individuals.

The complete report titled “Funding For Home Heating In Reconciliation Bill? Right Idea, Wrong Vehicle” can be found on the internet at www.cbpp.org.

Recorded vote on the Reed/Collins/Kennedy/Snowe motion instructing conferees to the Labor-HHS Appropriations Conference to insist on providing \$2.92 Billion for LIHEAP, in addition to the \$2.183 already in the conference report. U.S. Senate, December 15, 2005

AYEs -- 63

Akaka (D-HI)	Feingold (D-WI)	Murray (D-WA)
Baucus (D-MT)	Feinstein (D-CA)	Nelson (D-FL)
Bayh (D-IN)	Grassley (R-IA)	Obama (D-IL)
Bingaman (D-NM)	Harkin (D-IA)	Pryor (D-AR)
Burns (R-MT)	Inouye (D-HI)	Reed (D-RI)
Burr (R-NC)	Jeffords (I-VT)	Reid (D-NV)
Byrd (D-WV)	Johnson (D-SD)	Rockefeller (D-WV)
Carper (D-DE)	Kennedy (D-MA)	Salazar (D-CO)
Chafee (R-RI)	Kerry (D-MA)	Sarbanes (D-MD)
Clinton (D-NY)	Kohl (D-WI)	Schumer (D-NY)
Coleman (R-MN)	Landrieu (D-LA)	Smith (R-OR)
Collins (R-ME)	Lautenberg (D-NJ)	Snowe (R-ME)
Conrad (D-ND)	Leahy (D-VT)	Specter (R-PA)
Corzine (D-NJ)	Levin (D-MI)	Stabenow (D-MI)
Crapo (R-ID)	Lieberman (D-CT)	Stevens (R-AK)
Dayton (D-MN)	Lincoln (D-AR)	Sununu (R-NH)
DeWine (R-OH)	Lugar (R-IN)	Talent (R-MO)
Dole (R-NC)	Martinez (R-FL)	Thune (R-SD)
Domenici (R-NM)	McCain (R-AZ)	Voinovich (R-OH)
Dorgan (D-ND)	Mikulski (D-MD)	Warner (R-VA)
Durbin (D-IL)	Murkowski (R-AK)	Wyden (D-OR)

NAYs -- 28

Alexander (R-TN)	Craig (R-ID)	Kyl (R-AZ)
Allard (R-CO)	DeMint (R-SC)	Lott (R-MS)
Allen (R-VA)	Ensign (R-NV)	McConnell (R-KY)
Bennett (R-UT)	Enzi (R-WY)	Nelson (D-NE)
Bond (R-MO)	Frist (R-TN)	Roberts (R-KS)
Brownback (R-KS)	Gregg (R-NH)	Sessions (R-AL)
Bunning (R-KY)	Hagel (R-NE)	Shelby (R-AL)
Coburn (R-OK)	Hatch (R-UT)	Thomas (R-WY)
Cochran (R-MS)	Hutchison (R-TX)	
Cornyn (R-TX)	Inhofe (R-OK)	

Not Voting -- 9

Biden (D-DE)
Boxer (D-CA)
Cantwell (D-WA)

Chambliss (R-GA)
Dodd (D-CT)
Graham (R-SC)

Isakson (R-GA)
Santorum (R-PA)
Vitter (R-LA)