



## *National Fuel Funds Network*

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### **Energy Safety Net Bulletin #86**

Victorine Q. Adams, 93, founder of the Baltimore Fuel Fund and a long time supporter of the NFFN, died Sunday. Mrs. Adams started the Baltimore Fuel Fund in 1978 while she was serving on the Baltimore City Council. The fuel fund was renamed The Victorine Q. Adams Fuel Fund in 1999. Mrs. Adams, who is survived by her husband, William, is the honorary chairperson of the Fuel Fund of Maryland.

#### **Member Letter**

Dear NFFN Member: The Bush Administration has released \$100 million in LIHEAP emergency funds to help families cover their home energy costs this winter. The release of the emergency funds leaves another \$101 million in emergency funds available for the under funded LIHEAP program.

Before Congress left Washington for their holiday recess, they passed legislation providing \$2.1 billion in funding for LIHEAP for FY 06. Despite dramatic increases in home energy prices, funding for LIHEAP was kept at the same level as provided for FY 05.

Attempts to increase funding for the program by \$2 billion failed during the fight over whether to approve oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The oil drilling provisions as well as the increase in funding for LIHEAP were attached to the Defense Department appropriations bill but were removed when the Senate voted against approving drilling in the wildlife refuge.

Sens. Norm Coleman, Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins reported that they reached an agreement with the Senate leadership to have a vote on an emergency supplemental bill to provide an additional \$2 billion to LIHEAP when the Senate returns to session

next week. The Senators a vote on the additional \$2 billion will be taken sometime after the confirmation hearings for Supreme Court nominee Samuel Alito. NFFN will continue to monitor this issue and keep you informed.

### **Utility Actions**

- Laclede Gas is now matching dollar for dollar any new donations or increased monthly contributions by employees to Dollar-Help, up to \$1,000 per employee for a year. The matching program will run through March 1, 2006.
- Norfolk, VA based Virginia Natural Gas has donated \$125,000 to three community organizations in the Hampton Roads and Tidewater areas to help energy assistance programs. The EnergyShare program, run by the Salvation Army, received \$75,000 and \$25,000 each was given to the Southeastern Tidewater Opportunity Project and the Office of Human Affairs.
- The ONEOK Foundation has contributed \$1 million to assist residents in Oklahoma, Kansas and Texas with their energy bills. The foundation, which is a part of the Tulsa, OK based natural gas distributor ONEOK Inc., earmarked the funds for the Salvation Army in Oklahoma and Kansas and the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs.
- The Chesapeake Energy Corporation and the Devon Energy Corporation, two Oklahoma City-based energy companies, have donated \$250,000 each to the Oklahoma Fuel Fund, which will assist with home heating costs this winter for families in need.

The donations will be administered by The Salvation Army and will be distributed to individuals and families facing financial emergencies to help pay for the energy they need to heat their homes regardless of energy source.

### **State Government Actions**

- Maryland Governor Robert Ehrlich has written to the state's Public Service Commission asking them to take steps to protect customers of Baltimore Gas and Electric from what is expected to be major energy price increases when a six year cap on residential electricity rates expires this summer.

The Governor requested the PSC to submit proposals in two weeks for cushioning the effects of the expected increases. BG&E rates were capped as a part of legislation passed in 1999 that deregulated the electric utilities. Electric rates are expecting to increase by 20 to 50 percent when the cap expires in July.

Gov. Ehrlich indicated he was prepared to introduce legislation if the PSC decides it needs additional statutory authority to address the problem.

- Maine Governor John Baldacci has signed legislation providing \$5 million in state funds for LIHEAP. The funds will be used by the state's Housing Authority to purchase additional heating fuel for households eligible for LIHEAP.
- Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius said she would include \$5 million for energy assistance when she submits her budget to state legislators next week. The funds would be used for the Weatherization Assistance, Retrofitting and Maintenance (WARM) project.

According to the Governor's office, \$4 million would be used to pay for insulation, caulking for doors and window, furnace maintenance and other energy efficiency measures. Another \$1 million would be used to provide funds to help families on a waiting list for LIHEAP grants.

- In New Jersey, Acting Governor Richard J. Codey announced the state would contribute more than \$2.5 million in FY 2006 to NJShares to families in need pay their gas and electric bills this winter season. The State Treasury's Division of Taxation forwarded \$2.52 million from a special utility trust fund dedicated for temporary heating assistance, to NJ SHARES.

"Living through a New Jersey winter without electricity or natural gas is unimaginable. The quick response from Governor Codey's administration helps us avert a disaster for thousands of New Jersey families," said Jim Jacob, Executive Director of NJ SHARES. "These funds will allow good people to stay in their homes and work to resolve their situations."

- Governor Bill Owens of Colorado has proposed legislation that would allocate an additional \$20 million to the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program this winter. The funds would come from mineral and energy severance taxes paid to the state.

### **Tribal Activity**

- The Akwesasne Mohawk Casino and the Mohawk Bingo Palace have donated \$180,000 each to the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe in Akwesasne, NY for assistance grants. The money will be used by the tribe's Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program to offer \$600 in the form of fuel vouchers to 200 senior and 400 low-income households in Akwesasne.