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Dear Member: NFFN's Washington Action Day for LIHEAP, February 1, 2006 was extremely successful, with over 100 NFFN members and LIHEAP supporters fanning out over Capitol Hill to urge their Congressional delegations to support increased funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program.

Action Day participants conducted more than 200 meetings with Representatives, Senators or Congressional staff members and delivered the important message that LIHEAP funding must increase if the program is to do the job for which it was designed.

In addition, Action Day participants took part in a Capitol Hill news conference in which eight Senators called upon their colleagues to pass legislation providing additional funding for LIHEAP for this winter. Sens. Jack Reed (D-RI), Ted Kennedy (D-MA), Blanche Lincoln (D-AR), Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY), Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Jim Jeffords (I-VT), Tom Harkin (D-IA), and Paul Sarbanes (D-MD) explained to reporters how vital energy assistance is to so many people this winter and how important it is to provide adequate funding for the program.



Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton addresses the media, as Sen. Jack Reed looks on, during the Washington Action Day for LIHEAP news conference on Capitol Hill.

Sen. Clinton said she and other Senators had written to the President asking him to submit legislation providing a supplemental appropriation of \$2.9 billion for LIHEAP for this fiscal year and to include \$5.1 billion for LIHEAP in his budget request for FY 2007.

NFFN Chairperson Carol Clements told reporters that this winter's high energy costs coupled with static LIHEAP funding had created a "home energy crisis" and pointed out the ways that state governments and charitably funded energy assistance programs were trying, with limited success, to bridge the gap between LIHEAP funding and actual demand for aid.

Ms. Clements also introduced Katie Villegas, a LIHEAP recipient from Baltimore, who told her personal story about LIHEAP. Ms. Villegas, married and the mother of two children, explained how her husband had lost his job and her income, alone, was not enough to cover the family's expenses. She said she learned about LIHEAP through the Victorine Q. Adams Fuel Fund and applied for federal assistance. Ms. Villegas said that while she still owes money on her utility bills, the funds from LIHEAP were crucial.

Many NFFN members who could not come to Washington for Action Day also participated in the day's events in several ways. In response to a challenge to generate 1,000 emails to Congress issued by NFFN executive director George Coling, NFFN members and supporters sent 3,200 emails through the www.supportliheap.org website.

In addition, NFFN member companies and organizations sent special letters and reports to Congress and press releases were issued in Iowa, Missouri, Wisconsin and Oregon.

Washington Action Day, through your support, continues to grow in size and effectiveness. The efforts of our members and supporters have made this day of grassroots lobbying into one of the most important events supporting the program.

We have already begun planning for next year and will keep you informed of the events scheduled for Washington Action Day for LIHEAP 2007.

State and Local Government Actions

- Legislation is moving through the Colorado Legislature that will provide additional funding to support the state's Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP) and Energy Outreach Colorado. The bill also provides funds for the Colorado Office of Energy Management and Conservation to be used for efficiency upgrades to low-income housing.

The funds, which will be used through fiscal year 2009, will come from the state's severance tax fund. The bill calls for \$17 million for LEAP, \$3 million for Energy Outreach Colorado and \$4 million for the Office of Energy Management and Conservation for the current fiscal year.

- Three former governors of Maine have joined together to record public service announcements urging residents of the state to contribute to the Keep ME Warm Charitable Fuel Fund. The announcements featuring the voices of former Governors Angus King, John McKernan, and Joseph Brennan are airing on 42 radio stations around the state.
- Boston Mayor Thomas Menino announced that he has secured a \$1 million donation in fuel assistance from Excelebrate Energy to help Boston residents pay their home heating bills.

LIHEAP Update

The President's budget proposal for FY 2007, released February 6, includes \$1.782 billion in funding for LIHEAP, which on the surface is a funding reduction of \$318 million over the FY 06 level.

However, \$1 billion in funding for LIHEAP in FY 2007 was included in the recently passed budget reconciliation bill, which when added to the President's proposal would bring the FY 2007 funding level to \$2.782 billion, a \$621 million increase over FY 06.

In Monday's editions of the Congressional Quarterly, it was reported that Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist was considering introducing legislation that would move the \$1 billion in the budget reconciliation bill from FY 07 to the current fiscal year in order to provide additional funding for LIHEAP for this winter.

Sens. Olympia Snowe and Jack Reed have been negotiating with the Senate leadership over ways to increase funding for LIHEAP for this winter. Sens. Snowe and Reed have been seeking an additional \$2 billion for this winter.

If the Frist legislation wins approval, there would be an influx of funds for this winter, but the only funds for LIHEAP in the next fiscal year would be the \$1.782 billion in the President's budget.

Things are moving very quickly on this issue, and NFFN will keep you informed.

