



National Fuel Funds Network

1010 Vermont Ave., NW, #718

Washington, DC 20005

202 824-0638 (fax), 202 824-0660 (phone)

info@nationalfuelfunds.org www.nationalfuelfunds.org

March 23, 2006

Energy Safety Net Bulletin #91

Dear Member: The NFFN Board of Directors has set **Thursday, February 1, 2007** as the date for the 5th Annual Washington Action Day for LIHEAP. Please mark your calendars and make plans to come to the nation's capital for this important event.

This year more than 100 NFFN members and LIHEAP advocates participated in the NFFN organized day of lobbying for this vital government program. Next year we expect an even larger turnout, as we carry the fight for increased funding for LIHEAP to the halls of Congress.

Increasing the funding level for LIHEAP is extremely important if the federal energy assistance program is to continue to be useful. Home energy prices are not expected to drop by any significant amount for the next heating season. Funding for LIHEAP must keep pace with the rise in home energy costs if the program is to be effective.

It is important that the decision makers in Washington understand, in very human terms, the problems many households face as they strive to keep their homes livable and their families safe.

So once again, please mark **Thursday, February 1, 2007** on your calendars and make plans to come to Washington for the NFFN's 5th annual Washington Action Day for LIHEAP.

LIHEAP

- On March 20, President Bush on Monday signed legislation providing an additional \$1 billion in funding for LIHEAP for the current fiscal year. Under the terms of the measure, \$500 million would be made available as regular program funds and the other \$500 million would be contingency funds that could be released at the discretion of the president.

The signing of the legislation by President Bush marked the end of several months of debate and parliamentary maneuvers within the Congress as LIHEAP supporters worked to obtain additional funding for LIHEAP for this fiscal year.

State Government Actions

- Pennsylvania Gov. Edward Rendell has announced the extension of the state's LIHEAP program by three weeks to April 14 or until all program funds are exhausted. In addition, the Governor announced an increase in the program's crisis benefit from \$300 to \$600. Crisis benefits are available to people with heating emergencies such as furnace repairs or unexpected fuel shortages.

In other news from Pennsylvania, the state's Secretary of Public Welfare indicated to state legislators that the Rendell administration may not consider using state funds to prop up the federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program in the future.

Welfare Secretary Estelle Richman said "I'm very concerned at how much pressure we take off the federal government to provide the necessary resources. We want to look out for low-income Pennsylvania residents, but we have to balance that. Should Pennsylvania taxpayers and rate payers have to bear this burden?"

This winter the state provided between \$19.3 and \$ 21.3 million in state funds to supplement the federal energy assistance program.

- The Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission has approved the proposed merger of Cinergy Corp with Duke Energy. Under the terms of the agreement with the IRUC, PSI Energy Inc., the Indiana subsidiary of Cinergy, will make an annual contribution \$500,000 for five years to the state's Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program.

Completion of the merger is awaiting approval from the North Carolina Utilities Commission and utility spokesmen say they expect the deal to be completed around the first of May.

- The Georgia Public Service Commission has approved more than \$8 million in additional assistance to help low-income natural gas users pay their energy bills. The PSC ordered \$5.1 million in relief for low-income senior citizens, who are currently receiving a senior citizen discount from the Atlanta Gas Light Co. The seniors will receive a \$150 credit on their gas bills.

The PSC also approved the use of an additional \$3 million to assist other low-income gas customers who do not receive the senior citizen credit. The funds for these credits will come from the state's Universal Service Fund.

Utility Actions

- Northwestern Energy has contributed \$50,000 to Montana's "Warm Hearts Warm Homes" program to help weatherize the homes of low-income residents. The funds will be used to help the state catch up on a backlog to weatherization projects for recipients of LIHEAP.