



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

September 19, 2006

Energy Safety Net Bulletin #96

Dear Member: This Saturday, September 23rd, marks the official beginning of fall. While some energy assistance programs have already begun their program, many more will begin taking applications in the next few weeks.

The recent release of \$80 million in LIHEAP contingency funds to states in the eastern U.S. and Alaska has made assistance immediately available to some, but other states are still waiting for the Congress to approve LIHEAP funding for the coming fiscal year.

The appropriations bills that would fund the program for FY 07 are still stalled in Congress and their passage before the scheduled October Congressional break seems unlikely.

Please let us know how your program is preparing for the coming heating season. Write, call, or email us with information about your fundraising efforts, your planning for this year, and your views on the level of need for assistance in your community.

LIHEAP

- Governor Jim Doyle of Wisconsin and Governor Jennifer Granholm of Michigan have written to President Bush urging the president to release the remaining \$22 million in LIHEAP contingency funds. Last week, the Department of Health and Human Services announced the release of nearly \$80 million in LIHEAP funds to 14 states.

In their letter, the governors wrote "Unfortunately, your announcement left Midwestern states in the cold by designing a formula that excludes all states west of Pennsylvania, except Alaska.

The governors took exception to the HHS announcement that the funds would go to states in which low-income households make greatest use of fuel oil to heat their homes. "Since most Midwestern states rely on natural gas, this arbitrary standard excludes many states with long, cold winters and large numbers of families suffering from severe heating cost increases," they wrote.

“Therefore we strongly urge you to release the remaining \$22 million in federal heating assistance funds to Wisconsin, Michigan and other states that were deprived of the same consideration given to east coast states.”

Fuel Fund Activities

- In St. Louis, Papa John’s Pizza raised more than \$7,000 for EnergyCare through its fifth annual Cool Club fundraiser. Papa John’s donated \$1 from the price of each pizza sold on June to EnergyCare. The pizza restaurant teamed up with KMOV-TV to promote the event.
- Donations from employees of First Bank in St. Louis resulted in 49 air conditioners being presented to low income elder residents this summer. This was the eighth year for the fundraiser, which has provided 189 new air conditioners to EnergyCare for distribution to those in need. Employees’ donations are matched dollar for dollar by First Bank.

State Government Actions

- Pennsylvania Governor Edward Rendell has expanded eligibility requirements for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program from 135 percent to 150 percent of the federal poverty level. According to a statement from the governor, the widening of the eligibility requirements would “mean that an additional 67,000 Pennsylvania families would be eligible than at the 135 percent level.”

“Even though some energy prices have stabilized a bit in recent months, fuel oil is still 20 percent more costly than it was a year ago. By expanding eligibility, we can help more Pennsylvania families pay their home heating bills and stay warm and safe.”

Last winter, more than 385,000 families received cash grants and near 154,000 families received crisis assistance in Pennsylvania. Cash grants are used to pay home energy bills while crisis grants are used to help families with heating emergencies.

- The head of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program for West Virginia has announced a reduction in the size of its assistance grants citing uncertainty over the level of funding the state would receive for this coming winter. Dan Hartwell said the maximum amount of an assistance grant would be lowered from \$750 to \$500.

Last year, Congress provided additional funding for LIHEAP which resulting in West Virginia receiving an extra \$9 million. So far this year there has been little movement toward providing additional funding for the program.

Utility Actions

- The Atlanta Gas Light Company has donated \$445,445 to the Salvation Army of Atlanta for heating assistance for low-income families and the elderly in Georgia. An estimated 1,300 low-income households who still owe money on this past winter's natural gas bills will be eligible for this assistance.

Bryan Batson, senior vice president, external affairs for AGL Resources, the parent company of the Atlanta Gas Light Company, said "The Salvation Army is uniquely positioned to make sure this money will help those among us who are most in need. The funds will alleviate the stress of not being able to pay their heating bills."

The Georgia Public Service Commission voted in July to recommend that Atlanta Gas Light contribute funds from a consumer education fund to provide this assistance.

- Southern California Edison (SCE) has proposed to the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) that \$10 million be used to provide bill payment assistance to help low-income households pay high summer electricity bills. The utility recommended a one-time bill payment of up to \$150 to qualifying customers. If approved the CPUC the funds would be dispersed through SCE's Energy Assistance Fund to households with incomes within 400 percent of the federal poverty guidelines.

Surveys and Studies

- Most Vermont resident support the creation of an energy assistance program that would help low-income residents pay their electric bills, according to a study released by the AARP of Vermont.

A survey of 300 Vermonters found that more than eight in 10 favor such a program and more than 75 percent of those surveyed said they would support the program even if it meant adding a \$1.25 surcharge to their monthly electric bills.