



National Fuel Funds Network

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Dear Member: The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is predicting a warmer than normal winter for most of the United States. This news coupled with forecasts from the Energy Information Administration that the prices of most fuels used for home heating will decrease this winter has created a perplexing scenario for supporters of adequate funding for LIHEAP.

Funding legislation moving through Congress, so far, sets spending for LIHEAP for this fiscal year at \$1 billion less than the amount approved for the last fiscal year. Armed with the predictions of a warmer winter and forecasts of lower fuel prices, Congressional budget cutters will be less inclined to provide additional funds for LIHEAP. Unless action is taken to increase LIHEAP funding, as many as 600,000 households – served with additional funds last year – could be left in the cold or stifling heat.

These factors make our advocacy for LIHEAP and events like NFFN's Washington Action Day for LIHEAP, February 1, 2007 critical to the effectiveness of the program. We must effectively demonstrate to the members of Congress that despite the weather forecasts and the projected decrease in energy prices, many Americans will still not be able to meet their home energy costs.

We ask that you make plans to come to Washington on February 1, 2007 to participate in Washington Action Day for LIHEAP and that you continue to supply us with information about your community so that we can illustrate the problem to the lawmakers on Capitol Hill.

Breaking News

- Eighty two percent of the people surveyed said they support increased funding for LIHEAP, according to a survey released today by the Campaign for Home Energy Assistance.

The survey also showed that 57 percent of the people surveyed said they would more likely vote for a congressional representative who voted to increase funding for programs such as LIHEAP. In addition, 51 percent of respondents said they

would be more likely to vote against reelecting their congressional representative if he or she voted to reduce or end LIHEAP funding this year.

The survey's findings were released this morning at a news conference featuring Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME), Mark Wolfe, executive director of the National Energy Assistance Directors Association, and Earl de Berge of Behavior Research Center.

Sen. Collins, an outspoken advocate for LIHEAP, said she would continue to work for increased funding for LIHEAP. The current legislation funding LIHEAP for this fiscal year includes \$2 billion for the program a reduction of \$1 billion compared with last fiscal year. Sen. Collins said if approved this level of funding would cause hardships for many low-income people.

The full report can be viewed at the Campaign's website – www.liheap.org.

Forecasts and Projections

- This winter temperatures are expected to be above normal though slightly cooler than last year according to the latest winter weather outlook prepared by the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration's Climate Prediction Center.

According to NOAA, warmer than average temperatures can be expected across the West, the Southwest, the Plains states, the Midwest, most of the Northeast and the northern mid-Atlantic. The forecast also calls for wetter than average conditions across most of the country.

The complete winter weather outlook can be viewed at NOAA's website – www.noaa.gov.

- The prices of most home heating fuels are expected to decrease this winter according to projections from the Energy Information Administration (EIA). The EIA's Short Term Energy Outlook projected that on average households heating with natural gas would see a 13 percent decrease in prices compared with last winter.

The Outlook also projected increases of six percent for homes using heating oil, one percent for homes using propane and seven percent for homes heating with electricity.

The complete Short Term Energy Outlook is available at the EIA's website – www.eia.doe.gov.

Fuel Fund Activities

- Connecticut Light and Power reported that more than 27,000 customers had their service shut off for nonpayment so far this year and projected that the number would surpass the record of 34,000 shut-offs set last year. In the next few weeks, the utility plans to start reconnecting households that are protected under shut-off moratoria rules.

Pat Wrice, executive director of Operation Fuel, said her agency set aside \$50,000 in a special “off-season” fund to help households faced with cut-offs. Several other fuel banks across the state reported that their funds had been exhausted by the demand for assistance even before the heating season begins.

Reports, Studies and Polls

- The American Gas Association has released a new study that shows low-income households still need help in paying their energy bills and that the federal energy assistance program does not meet the demand.

According to the report, *Low-Income Energy Consumers: The Need For Assistance Continues*, “despite this year’s record-level funding of \$3.2 billion for LIHEAP, only 15 percent of 38 million eligible” households received federal aid.

AGA President and CEO David N. Parker said, “Congress acknowledged the need for additional LIHEAP funding when it increased the authorization for LIHEAP to \$5.1 billion in the Energy Policy Act of 2005. If fully funded, 3.6 million more households could be provided assistance.”

The report is available at the AGA website – www.aga.com.

- A new study of poverty in Maine reported that roughly 9 percent or 46,000 households in the state participated in the LIHEAP program in fiscal year 2004 – 2005. The previous year 44,000 households received federal energy assistance.

The report, “Poverty in Maine 2006,” was prepared by the University of Maine’s Margaret Chase Smith Center for the Maine Community Action Association.

- The Oregon Department of Housing and Community Services has released a new “Report on Poverty 2006” that shows that 74,585 households received energy assistance in 2004 as compared with 70,586 households in 2003.

The report, which looks at several aspects of poverty within the state, showed 22 percent of children under the age of 5 live in poverty and 15.9 percent of families with children lived in poverty in 2005. The full report can be seen at the department’s website – www.ohcs.oregon.gov.

Fire Prevention Week

- This week is National Fire Prevention Week and the focus for this week has been on preventing cooking fires. The greatest cause of home cooking fires is unattended cooking. The National Fire Protection Association is urging people to “Watch What They Heat.”

For more information, visit the National Fire Protection Association website – www.nfpa.org.