

NATIONAL FUEL FUNDS
NETWORK

Toolkit for
**National Fuel Funds Network's
Washington Action day for LIHEAP
February 1, 2007**



NATIONAL FUEL FUNDS NETWORK

**1010 VERMONT AVENUE, N.W. , SUITE 718
WASHINGTON, DC 20005
(202) 824-0660; FAX (202) 824-0638
WWW.NATIONALFUELFUNDS.ORG**

NFFN's Washington Action Day for LIHEAP: A Growing Tradition



Arkansas Senator Blanche Lincoln explains the need for additional funding for LIHEAP during Action Day 2006 news conference.



Baltimore resident Katie Villegas tells media how LIHEAP helped her family.

The 4th annual Washington Action Day for LIHEAP brought 120 National Fuel Funds Network members and LIHEAP supporters to the Capital on February 1, 2006. Action Day participants conducted some 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.

The display of support for LIHEAP demonstrated on Washington Action Day was very instrumental in securing an additional \$1 billion in funding for LIHEAP. Indeed, Senator Olympia Snowe, author of the amendment providing the additional funds, has since called the NFFN "...the preeminent advocate for heating and cooling assistance in the United States..."

Action Day participants joined in a Capitol Hill news conference with 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) who called upon their colleagues to pass legislation providing additional funding for LIHEAP.

NFFN Chairperson Carol Clements told reporters the nation is facing a "home energy crisis." Ms. Clements introduced Katie Villegas, a LIHEAP recipient from Baltimore, who told her personal story about LIHEAP.

Many NFFN members who could not come to Washington for Action Day 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, some NFFN members sent special letters to Congress while the Community Action Directors of Oregon sent a special report on LIHEAP to the members of their Congressional delegation. NFFN members in Iowa, Missouri and Wisconsin used their local media to increase coverage of the event.

The first Washington Action Day for LIHEAP, January 8, 2003 drew twenty NFFN members, called on a rush basis over the holidays. Together the members visited over thirty legislative offices and held a successful press conference with the Senate and House Northeast Midwest Coalition. NFFN members in eight states organized supporting activities ranging from press conferences to submission of client-signed petitions to Congressional Delegations (See Appendix). The Action Day was the sparkplug for the Bush Administration to release \$100 million in LIHEAP emergency funds and subsequent legislation applying another \$200 million to LIHEAP.

Washington Action Day for LIHEAP on January 20 2004 drew thirty members, who called on over 50 Congressional offices. On February 1, 2005, ninety NFFN members and LIHEAP advocates from 17 states, including large contingents from Baltimore and Delaware, came to Washington for the third annual NFFN Washington Action Day for LIHEAP and visited more than 100 Congressional offices.

Washington Action Day for LIHEAP has grown to become the signature event signaling the beginning of the lobbying effort on behalf of LIHEAP. The Network expects more than 125 NFFN members and LIHEAP supporters to participate in Washington Action Day for LIHEAP 2007.

**If you can come to Washington on February 1, 2007,
here's the program in a nutshell.**

In January 2007, Congress will convene its 110th Session. Within the month, the President will send to Congress his budget request for Fiscal Year 2008. The National Fuel Funds Network has earmarked Thursday, February 1, 2007 for its annual Washington Action Day for LIHEAP. NFFN picked the date to coincide with the beginning of the budget cycle.

The Network will equip its members arriving in Washington and those across the country with the latest information on the exact status of LIHEAP funding and arguments for increased funding. LIHEAP Databook, www.liheap.org/databook03/ provides concise state-by-state details. Participants in Action Day will present this information – along with local data and anecdotes about local needs – to legislators, when possible, in teams of utility and nonprofit organization representatives.

Action Day advocates will also ask the Administration to include more LIHEAP funding in the FY2008 budget, release emergency funds when needed and provide advance appropriations. Specifically NFFN asks for at least \$3.4 billion plus \$300 million, for FY2008 LIHEAP appropriations and the same amounts as advanced appropriations for FY 2009

**If you can't come to Washington,
please support Action Day for LIHEAP by organizing local activities**

You can amplify Washington advocates' requests for LIHEAP funding with a strong message from your community. Focus your message on what is happening locally:

- ◆ How does the demand compare with the funds that you have available?
- ◆ How does the demand compare with that for this time last year?
- ◆ Are you changing eligibility or reducing payments?
- ◆ Are you seeing increased donations in your charitable energy assistance programs?
- ◆ Are you making special accommodations for new clients that may be generated by households whose unemployment benefits have run out?
- ◆ How many jobs are created through energy assistance and weatherization programs in your community?
- ◆ How would advance funding for LIHEAP benefit your program?

NFFN will support local activities:

We will rush multiple copies of NFFN'S "LIHEAP Saves Lives Bookmarks" to you. The bookmarks are a simple reference guide to LIHEAP advocacy meant for mass distribution.

For those wishing to thank legislators for LIHEAP support, we will rush you quantities of post cards designed for clients or individuals to send to Senators and Representatives in Washington.

Activities organized later than February 1 will still have an impact. Please keep NFFN informed about activities you organize.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES:

Create a “District/State Action Day for LIHEAP”

Partner with local fuel funds, utilities, energy marketers, fuel oil companies, social service providers, weatherization programs.

Invite:

- ◆ Local/District Congressional staff.
- ◆ Local legislative representatives, state, county, and city representatives, public utility commissioners, etc.
- ◆ Energy assistance recipients.
- ◆ Other low-income advocates, such as housing programs, hunger advocates, etc. Ask them to talk about the link between hunger or housing and the need for energy assistance.
- ◆ Include the media

Schedule appointments with local Congressional offices

Provide accurate information. Make it relevant, short, and easy to reference. Keep written materials to one page. You may provide additional background material with your main message, but don't leave reams of paper. Include your contact information. Another option is to let staff know what kind of resources you have available should they need them. The appointment is especially important if your Senator or Representative is a member of one of the Appropriations Subcommittees that consider LIHEAP funding. NFFN will distribute rosters of the Subcommittees' memberships when they become available in early 2007.

Sponsor a “Call-in-Event”

Distribute flyers to staff, Boards of Directors, coalition members, and clients with phone numbers to your local congressional office or provide cell phones to call Washington DC legislators' offices.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES:

Petition Campaign

Ask your staff, Boards of Directors, coalition members, clients and other citizens to sign petitions asking for increased funding and advanced appropriations. Personally deliver them to local Congressional offices if possible. Mail copies to your Senator and Representative's offices in Washington, your Governor and the White House.

Total Community Action in New Orleans used this activity in 2003. TCA forwarded petitions with over 900 signatures to Louisiana's Congressional delegation. A sample copy of their petition is appended to in the toolkit.

Media Events

- ◆ Meet with the editorial staff of your local newspaper to explain the LIHEAP program and seek media support.
- ◆ Write an op-ed piece.
- ◆ Host a press conference.
- ◆ Consider purchasing paid advertising in local media.

Please share your supporting events and information with NFFN by

E-mail: info@nationalfuelfunds.org or

Fax: 202-824-0638

For more information:

National Fuel Funds Network

George Coling, Executive Director
1010 Vermont Avenue, NW, Suite 718
Washington, DC 20005
coling@nationalfuelfunds.org
www.nationalfuelfunds.org
Phone 202-824-0660; Fax 202-824-0638

Congress

To find your Senator:	www.senate.gov
To find your Representative:	www.house.gov
House/Senate switchboard	202-224-3121

The President

White House
Washington, DC 20500
Phone 202-456-1414; Fax: 202-456-2461

Campaign for Home Energy Assistance
202-331-2962
www.liheap.org

LIHEAP Clearinghouse
888-294-8662
www.ncat.org/liheap

National Energy Assistance Director's Association
(NEADA)
202-237-5199
www.neada.org

Office of Energy Assistance, USDHHS
202-401-9352
www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/liheap

Appendix

Source: Total Community Action
New Orleans, LA
James Wallace Jr.
504-822-8443

PETITION FOR RELIEF!!!

We, the undersigned, appeal for your support of adequate funding of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). \$300 million dollars must be released immediately to insure that more than 16,000 eligible Louisiana families can receive assistance with paying their utility bills during these difficult times.

Whereas, the Bush Administration has proposed a reduction in funding for 2003 from \$1.7 billion to \$1.4 billion, and

Whereas, \$2 billion dollars is the minimum for adequate funding for 2004, and

Whereas, the reduction in support for LIHEAP will mean a \$2.7 million reduction in LIHEAP support for Louisianan families, and

Whereas, 16,378 Louisiana families who qualify for LIHEAP support will be literally “left out in the cold”, and

Whereas, this winter has already shown the potential for being severe, and

Whereas, energy experts estimate that utility cost will rise by \$100 to \$300 dollars per year for the average family, and

Whereas, wealthy are being given a tax cut to “stimulate the economy”, and

Whereas, the President still has \$300 million dollars in LIHEAP emergency funds he has not released.

We demand that the \$300 million dollars be restored to LIHEAP to help struggling families in Louisiana make ends meet.

Sample Letter to: Louisiana Senator Mary Landrieu
Total Community Action
New Orleans, LA

January 8, 2003

The Honorable Mary Landrieu
U.S. Senate
707 Florida Street, Ste 326
Baton Rouge, LA 70801

Dear Senator Landrieu,

More than 16,000 Louisiana families will be deprived of assistance to pay increasingly higher utility bills this winter unless the Senate authorizes the immediate release of \$300 million in emergency assistance for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

As you begin your second term as our U.S. Senator, we urge your support and strong advocacy for immediate relief for needy families struggling to keep pace with increased energy costs. And we also urge your support for a minimum funding of \$2 billion for LIHEAP in the upcoming fiscal year.

The Bush Administration has proposed a cut in LIHEAP funding from \$1.7 billion to \$1.4 billion for the current fiscal year. This proposed cut is part of the appropriations bill you will deliberate later this month. The President is also proposing additional cuts for the next fiscal year. These cuts in critical assistance, which allows low and fixed income people to meet basic needs (i.e. electricity and gas), will cause many Louisiana families great hardships.

The proposed cuts for the current year will reduce Louisiana's allocation from \$14.7 million to \$12 million. This 17.8% reduction will mean 16,378 families, who qualify for assistance will be literally "left out in the cold". This reduction of support comes at a time when utility experts are estimating that annual energy expenditures will increase from \$100 to \$300. Furthermore, the President is depriving the most needy in our country as he proposes to "stimulate the economy" by accelerating tax cuts for the wealthy and eliminating stock dividend taxes altogether.

We implore you to reassert your role as champion of Louisiana's families and fight for release of the \$300 million for LIHEAP.

Thank you for your consistent support of LIHEAP, and be assured that the people of Louisiana stand with you in this fight to help many low and fixed incomes citizens during these difficult times.

Sincerely,

[Signatures of all Board members]

The Board of Directors of
Total Community Action