

National Fuel Funds Network

Mobilizing
for
Charitable Energy Assistance

Winter 2005 – 06



**NETWORKING FOR
ACTION**

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NATIONAL FUEL FUNDS NETWORK

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June 7, 2005

Dear NFFN Members and Colleagues:

The National Fuel Funds Network has started the national **Mobilization for Charitable Energy Assistance** for a third year. The Mobilization's purpose is to soften the potentially disastrous impact of home energy price increases among the clients of NFFN members. The Mobilization is NFFN's campaign asking Governors to initiate actions to increase awareness of our fuel funds and generate increased donations to them. I ask you to assist us motivate Governors to join in what we hope will be a truly national mobilization.

Governors are generally supportive of increased energy assistance. A number of them have taken steps, since we began our mobilization effort, to increase charitable energy assistance in their respective states and highlight the need for energy assistance. For instance, in the two years since I first wrote to the Governors:

- Lt. Governor (now Governor) Jodi Rell of Connecticut held press conferences, urging that state's citizens to contribute to the statewide Operation Fuel.
- Iowa Governor Tom Vilsack appeared in a video PSA urging Iowans in need to apply for LIHEAP and those not in need to contribute to a fuel fund. The Iowa Association for Community Action produced and distributed the PSA .
- Wisconsin Governor Doyle recorded a public service announcement encouraging donations to local fuel funds
- Maryland Governor Robert Ehrlich has twice declared an Energy Awareness Week, featuring an Energy Expo in Baltimore with one-stop shopping for private and LIHEAP assistance.
- Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm issued a proclamation making the week of February 21 "Keep Michigan Warm Week."

All of these efforts (see www.nationalfuel Funds.org/advocacy.html for examples of the PSA's and other material) increased charitable energy assistance to people in need. Therefore, NFFN is again urging Governors to step forward with actions similar to those above.

I will soon be writing the Governors again, urging their involvement and suggesting activities for building charitable resources. The suggestions include declaring a Fuel Fund Day or Energy Assistance Awareness Week, organizing an Energy Assistance Summit and holding media events.

The Network does not have the resources to organize events in different states. However, NFFN has the tremendous resource of our local members. On behalf of the Board of Directors, **I encourage NFFN members to participate in the Mobilization** by working directly with Governors, as we suggest in the letter, or in other ways. Many of you are doing so already. The National Fuel Funds Network will assist your efforts with:

- this toolkit, *Mobilizing for Charitable Energy Assistance*, to help you work with your Governor and other community partners
- an op-ed campaign. Last year I sent several hundred newspapers an opinion article, “The Cold Breath of Winter”, on the home energy crisis and the need to raise more charitable energy assistance. The NFFN will prepare another article for this year’s mobilization
- ideas and models of what’s happening in other states and solid information on energy assistance.

But the success of the Mobilization will ultimately depend on your ideas and initiatives working in your state.

For those of us working in the low-income energy arena, the challenges are greater than ever. The purchasing power of the LIHEAP appropriation continues to drop as energy prices rise. As you well know, thousands of customers on fixed and low-incomes will soon be in crisis – if they are not already there – as they try to stretch their limited resources to meet an ever-increasing energy burden.

The Mobilization is to reduce the gap between the need and resources available. Mobilizing across the country to bring increased attention to the need and build our resources is one way we can all work to help fill this gap. The NFFN will monitor any statewide activities – please keep us informed – and report them to our members and to the media.

As always, we will continue to update you through our website and the *Energy Safety Net Bulletins*. We also encourage you to share your work with us as you organize and coordinate activities for national Mobilization for Charitable Energy Assistance.

Thank you for your attention to and participation in the Mobilization. Please contact NFFN Executive Director George Coling, 202-824-0660, coling@nationalfuel funds.org for more information.

Yours truly,



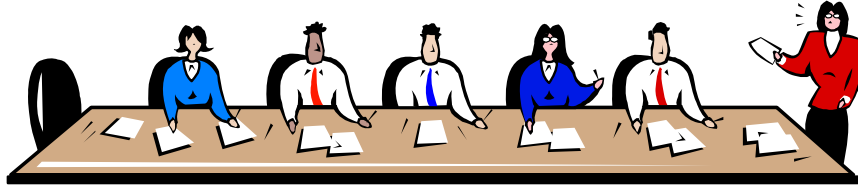
Carol Clements, Chairperson
Board of Directors
National Fuel Funds Network

Mobilizing **for** **Charitable Energy Assistance**

Approaching your Governor

Present the situation in your state. Share the NFFN letter. Point out that other Governors have taken action. Then, you may want to try any of the following:

- **Inquire about what events the Governor would like to initiate or participate in to help you mobilize.**
- **Ask the Governor to proclaim a Fuel Fund Day or Energy Assistance Awareness Day or Week.**
- **Suggest the Governor a hold press conference with utilities and fuel funds to highlight the need for charitable energy assistance donations.**
- **Ask that the Governor convene a statewide “Summit” to coalesce a common strategy for utilities, nonprofits and local and state agencies to address the home energy crisis.**
- **Urge the Governor to take to the airwaves with a Public Service Announcement. A nonprofit agency will have to produce the PSA.**
- **Invite the Governor to visit your facility and meet with clients, as a media event and listening session for the Governor.**
- **Ask the Governor to write letters to your Congressional Delegation asking for increased federal LIHEAP and weatherization funding.**
- **Request that your Governor make a personal donation showing her or his support and challenge others to do the same.**



Including your Community Partners

- **Invite utilities and fuel oil providers, service providers, board members, faith based programs, community action agencies, consumer advocacy, civic and labor organizations.**
- **Invite your state legislators and your Congressional Delegation.**
- **Contact organizations working in other poverty arenas. It's easy to make the connection between hunger, housing, and the lack of resources for basic needs. These organizations can help educate others and provide a broader view of the issues and the lack of resources.**
- **Ask clients to tell their stories. Include both households who have been helped by energy assistance and those who were turned away by lack of funds. Ask them to talk about how this affected their lives. They can put a human face on the issue. Please furnish NFFN copies of the testimony, so the Network can educate the media nationally.**

Documenting the Need

- **Talk about energy burdens and percentages. Make the numbers real by showing what the energy burden of the low-income would mean to the average family.**
- **Provide demographic information about those you serve. Include information about income, age, disability, housing, etc.**
- **Include information about your state's minimum wage and housing costs to show where a household's resources are going.**
- **Discuss the impacts of any recent cuts to other programs and how the shift in resources has impacted your clients and their ability to pay their energy bills.**
- **Provide statistics about households served by fuel funds and by LIHEAP.**

- Provide information about average bills and average assistance amounts, highlighting the difference. Is the assistance you are providing enough to help? For how long?
- Document increases in fuel prices or rates in your communities.
- Talk about unmet need. Emphasize those you're not able to serve, i.e. if you're serving 20% of the eligible population, present the message that 80% of those eligible can't be helped. Provide numbers on waiting lists, numbers of calls each day/week/month, number of disconnects, etc.
- The National Fuel Funds Network can help you garner data and fashion arguments. Contact NFFN Executive Director George Coling, 202-824-0660, coling@nationalfuelfunds.org.

Additional Talking Points

- Provide information showing how much money energy assistance programs bring to your state. Make the connection between these dollars and the economic activity this creates.
- Let the Governor know how many jobs the energy assistance, weatherization and other energy related programs provide in your state.



Other Activities

- Organize a statewide LIHEAP call-in day where providers and clients call decision-makers in concert. Contact NFFN for more details
- Participate in NFFN's 4th Annual Washington Action Day for LIHEAP on February 1, 2006. For registration and a toolkit on participation, visit www.nationalfuelfunds.org/advocacy.html.
- Check the NFFN website regularly for updates www.nationalfuelfunds.org

For information and further assistance contact:

**NFFN Executive Director George Coling, 202-824-0660,
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Please share with NFFN any press releases, client statements, event notices or other information about work you are doing to increase charitable energy assistance resources.