



NATIONAL FUEL FUNDS
NETWORK

**MOBILIZING FOR CHARITABLE
ENERGY ASSISTANCE**



NATIONAL FUEL FUNDS NETWORK

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October 2007

Dear NFFN Members and Colleagues:

The National Fuel Funds Network kicked off its 5th national **Mobilization for Charitable Energy Assistance** on October 1, 2007, with my letter to fifty governors. The **Mobilization's** purpose is to encourage governors to build charitable energy assistance resources in their states.

For the past five years, the **Mobilization** has targeted the nation's governors as individuals with the stature and power to increase awareness of our fuel funds and generate increased donations to them. I ask you to assist us motivate our Governors to join in what continues to grow into a truly national mobilization.

Governors are generally supportive of increased energy assistance. A number of Governors 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 four years since the NFFN first wrote to the Governors:

- Colorado Governor Bill Owens was featured in Public Service Announcements promoting donations to Energy Outreach Colorado and encouraging families to apply for LIHEAP. The 15 and 30 second PSAs were produced by the local NBC affiliate.
- Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius initiated a statewide campaign advising consumers to conserve energy and urging Kansans to support local energy assistance programs. The campaign featured radio and television public service announcements, posters and a website.
- 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 that not in need to contribute to a fuel fund. The Iowa Association for Community Action produced and distributed the.
- 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 has twice issued a proclamation making the third of February "Keep Michigan Warm Week."
- The governors in several states broadened eligibility requirements for LIHEAP grants and reallocated state funds to supplement federal energy assistance funds.

(Visit <http://www.nationalfuelfunds.org/mobilizationforcharitableenergyassistance/index.html> for full coverage.)

All of these efforts increased charitable energy assistance to people

in need. Therefore, NFFN is again urging Governors to step forward with actions similar to those above.

See Appendix for copy of my October 1 letter to the Governors.

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. In previous years the NFFN sent several hundred newspapers an opinion article 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 the 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@nationalfuelfunds.org for more information.

Yours truly,

Greg Sawyers, Chairperson
Board of Directors, National Fuel Funds Network

APPROACHING YOUR GOVERNOR

Present the situation in your state and community. Share the NFFN letter. Point out that other elected officials 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 that the Governor to proclaim a Fuel Fund Day or Energy Assistance Awareness Day or Week.
- Suggest that the Governor hold a 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, non-profits 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 your Governor to visit your facility and meet with clients, as a media event.
- Ask the Governor to write letters to your Congressional Delegation asking for increased federal LI-HEAP 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 and local news clippings 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 6th Annual Washington Action Day for LIHEAP on January 30, 2008. 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:

National Fuel Funds Network

Executive Director

George Coling

202-824-0660

coling@nationalfuelfunds.org

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.

APPENDIX A

NFFN Letter to Fifty Governors

October 1, 2007

Mobilization for Charitable Energy Assistance

Dear Governor:

As we begin this home heating season, millions of Americans are struggling to deal with high home energy costs. Many people are trying to forestall utility cut-offs because of large arrearages while others are looking for ways to cope with their high monthly bills.

The situation in many households is dire and will worsen as the heating season progresses. With this home energy crisis as a backdrop, the National Fuel Funds Network is once again appealing to you and your fellow governors for assistance in mobilizing public support for local charitable energy assistance programs.

Let me provide you with a snapshot of the current situation:

The National Energy Assistance Directors Association (NEADA) recently projected that this winter home energy prices would increase by 10.5% for all families and reach record levels for home heating oil, propane and electricity. The NEADA projections are available on the internet at www.neada.org/comm/press/pr2007-09-25.pdf.

A state-by-state study of the energy burden borne by low income households showed that many people face a “crippling burden” with energy costs representing more than 20 percent of their income. A detailed profile of your state is attached. A national overview of this data is available at www.homeenergyaffordabilitygap.com/08.

Appropriations for the federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) are in limbo, and all indications are that LIHEAP will not receive any significant increase for this fiscal year.

During the past year, only one out of five households eligible for LIHEAP actually received assistance from the program.

For the last four years, the National Fuel Funds Network has appealed to our nation’s governors to mobilize charitable energy assistance resources to ameliorate similar situations. The response has been encouraging. Governors have produced public service announcements, proclaimed state energy assistance weeks, held press conferences and taken other steps to increase awareness

of available assistance programs and successfully encourage contributions to them. A sampling of these actions can be viewed on our website at www.nationalfuelfunds.org/mobilizationforcharitableenergyassistance/index.html.

On behalf of NFFN's member agencies and companies and the energy assistance clients they serve, I am asking you to consider the actions of your fellow governors and take whatever steps you can to encourage the citizens of your state to support charitably funded energy assistance program.

We sincerely appreciate your efforts to bring attention to the need for charitable energy assistance donations. The National Fuel Funds Network membership is made up of more than 300 nonprofits, utilities, and government agencies across the country. Our members in your state as well as our staff in Washington, DC stand ready to assist you in any way in this endeavor. Please contact NFFN Executive Director George Coling at our offices in Washington, DC, 202 824-0660, coling@nationalfuelfunds.org.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Sawyers". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "G" and "S".

Greg Sawyers, Chairperson
National Fuel Funds Network
Board of Directors