

News

January 18, 2008

Action Alert

To: NFFN members and allies

Washington Action Day for LIHEAP – Registration still open.

NFFN's Washington Action Day for LIHEAP is but a week and a half away. Thank you, if you have already registered. We have record registration of over 160, but the Network still welcomes your participation in the nation's signature lobbying-for-LIHEAP event. If you can participate, please visit <http://www.nationalfuelfunds.org/AdvocacyPublicPolicy/2008ActionDay.html> to register and for a schedule of activities and hotel information.

If you can't make it to DC on January 30, please amplify the voices of those walking the halls of Congress on Action Day in the following ways:

- Visit, use and circulate the website www.supportliheap.org <<http://www.supportliheap.org>> , which generates letters to Congress based on the users' zip codes.
- Consult our Toolkit for Washington Action Day for LIHEAP at www.nationalfuelfunds.org/AdvocacyPublicPolicy/2008toolkit_web.pdf <http://www.nationalfuelfunds.org/AdvocacyPublicPolicy/2008toolkit_web.pdf>. It is full of ideas to organize local activities and events to support your colleagues who have travelled to Washington.
- View the advocacy video at www.liheap.org <<http://www.liheap.org>> and read of the groundbreaking Fuel for the Future: Impact of Energy Insecurity on Children's Health, Nutrition by a prestigious group of pediatric health specialists at www.nationalfuelfunds.org/nffnpressroom/Fuel%20for%20Our%20Future%209-18-07.pdf <<http://www.nationalfuelfunds.org/nffnpressroom/Fuel%20for%20Our%20Future%209-18-07.pdf>> .
- Send the links to your Representatives and Senators, along with information from your community and a request to increase markedly LIHEAP funding. Emails are available in the directories at www.senate.gov <<http://www.senate.gov>> and www.house.gov <<http://www.house.gov>> . \

Legislative Landscape

Your action will build Congressional momentum on some important initiatives to secure additional LIHEAP funds. Here is the legislative situation.

President Bush signed the FY 2008 appropriation bill that included LIHEAP on December 26. The bill provided \$1.98 billion in block grants and \$590.33 million in contingency funds. On January 16, the Department of Health and Human Services released \$450 million of the contingency funds to the states.

Right before the Holiday break, Senate Majority Leader Reid committed to Senators Sanders, Coleman and other sponsors that he would schedule a vote on an amendment to add \$800 million additional FY 2008 LIHEAP funds to an amendable piece of legislation coming through the Senate in early 2008. According to Senator Sanders' staff, there are four candidates for this legislation about to move in the Senate. On Action Day, we will articulate the need for the additional funds and press for inclusion one of the bills, as it moves through the Senate. NFFN will keep you informed of the status of the amendment.

Meanwhile, the President and Congress are moving on a separate track to develop an economic stimulus package. The President announced his plan today, with no mention of LIHEAP. Congressional sources report that the House leadership bill may include an unspecified amount for LIHEAP.

Action Requested

In the Senate, Senators Reed and Collins are circulating a Dear Colleague letter to the Senate leadership asking for the inclusion of \$3.62 billion as part of the economic stimulus. A copy of the letter follows. Please contact your Senators immediately (202-224-3121) and ask that they sign the Reed-Collins Dear Colleague letter. To sign the letter, a Senator's staff should contact Kristen Sarri of Senator Reed's office, 202-224-4642, kristen_sarri@reed.senate.gov. The letter will be sent on Wednesday, January 23, so it is important to make your calls on Tuesday, January 22.

Senator Clinton has introduced her own economic stimulus plan which includes \$25 billion (not a typo) for LIHEAP, enough to provide assistance to all 37 million households currently eligible.

NFFN will also keep you informed of the status of the economic stimulus legislation, and Action Day participants will press for funding in this measure also.

Thank you for the hard work that you are doing to bring additional LIHEAP funds to fruition.

Draft letter from Senators to the Senate leadership asking for inclusion of \$3.62 billion for LIHEAP in the economic stimulus legislation

January 23, 2008

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Republican Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert C. Byrd
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid, Republican Leader McConnell, Chairman Byrd, and Ranking Member Cochran:

We are writing to request that in the economic stimulus package you include an additional \$3.62 billion for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) to fully fund the program at \$5.1 billion in FY2008 and provide an additional \$500 million in contingency funding. An infusion of LIHEAP funding can be used by low-income households to help cope with their rising home energy bills. LIHEAP funds will be spent quickly and immediately to stimulate the economy and provide a vital safety net to families and seniors so they do not need to choose between eating and paying their energy bill.

With the price of oil remaining at a record high and the cost of natural gas increasing, the Energy Information Administration (EIA) estimates that households can expect to pay between 8 to 39 percent more for heating fuels than during the 2007-2008 winter. Home heating prices are projected by the EIA to reach almost \$1,000 this year for the typical family. As a result, there has been a significant decrease in the program's purchasing power. The level of assistance that the program is providing is not enough to help meet a household's escalating energy burden. As such, states need additional funding immediately to reduce the energy burden of families, individuals with disabilities, and senior citizens and ensure their health and safety this winter.

LIHEAP is vital to protecting the public health and safety of low-income families. According to the Children's Sentinel Nutrition Assessment Program (C-SNAP) out of Boston Medical Center, babies and toddlers who live in energy insecure households are more likely to suffer poor health, require hospitalization, manifest developmental problems, and lack adequate food. C-SNAP found that when families do not have access to sufficient energy, they may resort to unsafe heating methods and do not have the proper means to refrigerate or prepare food for their children. In addition, without a sufficient LIHEAP benefit, seniors living on fixed incomes often have to decide between buying life-saving prescriptions and paying utility bills. For individuals and households that may have to face these difficult choices, LIHEAP makes a real difference in their ability to cope with adverse circumstances.

We request that the economic stimulus package provide at least \$3.62 billion in additional funding for LIHEAP in FY2008 to help low-income seniors and families with their home energy expenses.

Sincerely,

Jack Reed

Susan M. Collins

George Coling, Executive Director
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