



NLIEC NEWS, July 31, 2008

Within the Energy Assistance Community ...

- **NFFN's Victorine Q. Adams Institute, Baltimore September 16-17, 2008**

Registration is still open for the National Fuel Funds Network's Victorine Q. Adams Institute. A team of NFFN members have developed a two-day program for the first-ever national gathering on charitable energy assistance fundraising.

The first day will focus on current best practices in fundraising for energy assistance. The second day will develop a strategic fundraising vision for NFFN members and the Network, itself. To register

for the Institute and for the hotel, visit www.nationalfuelfunds.org <<http://www.nationalfuelfunds.org>> .

- **Survey Shows Weatherization Funding Decline**

A recent national survey reports nearly \$663 million was available during Program Year 2007 to operate the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP), a decrease of 10.6 percent from PY 2006 funding of \$741.4 million.

The National Association for State Community Services Programs surveyed the 50 states and the District of Columbia and tallied the amount of funds each received from the following sources: the U.S. Department of Energy, WAP, LIHEAP grant set-asides, settlements from Petroleum Violation Escrow (PVE) cases and "other" funds from utility companies, states and property owner contributions. During 2007, DOE funds amounted to about 31 percent of the total, LIHEAP funds 39 percent, "other" funds 30 percent, and PVE funds less than 1 percent. — **LIHEAP Clearinghouse, July 31, 2008**

Read more at:

<http://www.liheap.ncat.org/news/july08/wap.htm> <<http://www.liheap.ncat.org/news/july08/wap.htm>>

In Washington ...

• **Bill to Increase LIHEAP Funding Fails in Senate**

A measure that would have substantially increased funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program in the current fiscal year has failed to get the necessary votes needed for passage in the Senate on July 26.

The Warm in Winter and Cool in Summer Act, sponsored by Senator Bernard Sanders (I-VT), would have provided an additional \$2.5 billion in supplemental FY 2008 funding for LIHEAP. The bill would have required 60 votes to invoke cloture and shut off debate. The vote was 50 to 35. Republicans voted against the bill because it did not address the need to increase domestic oil and gas production. The Administration issued a veto threat opposing the bill because "LIHEAP is primarily a heating assistance program and many states end their programs in the Spring."

Sanders called the outcome an outrage. "I appreciate the Republican senators who broke ranks and supported the bill, but I regret that too few put principle over politics," Sanders said. "I understand the games that are played in Washington, but it doesn't make the obstruction tactics any less revolting. This is life or death. People are dying in the summer heat. People will freeze to death this winter."

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) switched his "yea" vote to a "nay" at the end of the vote to preserve the ability to bring the bill up at a later point in the session. More than 380 organizations and companies signed a letter to Senator Sanders supporting his bill.

After the August break, Congress is likely to take up a second economic stimulus bill, and LIHEAP FY 2008 funds may be included.

View the roll call on the vote at:

http://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm?congress=110&session=2&vote=00187#position <http://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm?congress=110&session=2&vote=00187#position>

Read more at:

<http://uk.reuters.com/article/oilRpt/idUKN2540857020080726> <<http://uk.reuters.com/article/oilRpt/idUKN2540857020080726>>
<http://www.cqpolitics.com/wmspage.cfm?parm1=5&docID=news-000002926452> <<http://www.cqpolitics.com/wmspage.cfm?parm1=5&docID=news-000002926452>>

Editorials on the vote:

<http://theboard.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/07/28/whats-the-matter-with-new-hampshire/> <<http://theboard.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/07/28/whats-the-matter-with-new-hampshire/>>
<http://www.courier-journal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080729/OPINION01/807290360>

<http://kennebecjournal.maintoday.com/view/columns/5271376.html> <<http://kennebecjournal.maintoday.com/view/columns/5271376.html>>
<http://www.unionleader.com/article.aspx?headline=The+LIHEAP+lie%3A+Harry+Reid's+slick+trick&articleId=5c5fa883-7e1f-4558-853e-2f4adafc0f51> <<http://www.unionleader.com/article.aspx?headline=The+LIHEAP+lie%3A+Harry+Reid's+slick+trick&articleId=5c5fa883-7e1f-4558-853e-2f4adafc0f51>>

In the States ...

Support Builds for Energy Session in Maine Legislature

Gov. John Baldacci and legislative leaders say support is building for an energy special session this summer to address what the state can do to help Mainers weather the energy crisis next winter. “I have talked with legislators and they want to do something to help people this year,” Baldacci said in an interview. “They know, we all know, that this winter will be very difficult and we need to do what we can to help people cope.” He is expecting a package of both short-term measures and long-term proposals by mid-month. He said while his goal is to move Maine toward energy independence, the first priority will be action over the next few months to help Mainers ready for the winter heating season. — *Bangor (ME) Daily News*, July 3, 2008

Read more at:

<http://bangornews.com/news/t/news.aspx?articleid=166643&zoneid=5> <<http://bangornews.com/news/t/news.aspx?articleid=166643&zoneid=5>>

Pennsylvania Governor Signs Bill Establishing \$650 Million Energy Fund

Pennsylvania Governor Edward Rendell on Wednesday signed a new law that will establish a fund that could save both families and small businesses money on their energy bills by supporting investments in renewable energy, energy efficiency and conservation.

Included in the new \$650 million fund is \$370 million that will provide: \$165 million for loans and grants for renewable energy projects (except solar) among businesses and local governments. \$100 million to provide loans, grants and rebates that cover up to 35 percent of the costs residential consumers and small businesses incur for installing for solar energy technology, \$80 million in grants and loans for economic development projects in the solar sector and \$25 million for wind energy and geothermal projects. — *Renewable Energy World.com*, July 10, 2008

Read more at:

<http://www.renewableenergyworld.com/rea/news/story?id=53023> <<http://www.renewableenergyworld.com/rea/news/story?id=53023>>

Montana Governor Allocates \$1 Million for Weatherization

Montana Gov. Brian Schweitzer signed an executive order declaring an energy emergency and allocating approximately \$1 million in state funds to be used for weatherizing more homes in Montana. The money will be split evenly between the state’s Weatherization Assistance Program grantee, the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS), and the governor’s Warm Hearts Warm Homes Initiative, which combines public and private funds, donations and volunteer labor to provide low-cost weatherization.

The DPHHS estimated approximately 2,480 dwellings will receive low/no cost weatherization measures through the latter program and about 169 high energy burden homes will receive full scale weatherization through the weatherization network. In his order, the governor expressed special concern about high energy prices saying “ in recent months, energy rates have reached record high levels and are predicted by major suppliers to increase by 54 percent or more during the winter months.” — **LIHEAP Clearinghouse, July 23, 2008**

Read more at:

<http://www.liheap.ncat.org/news/july08/MT.htm> <<http://www.liheap.ncat.org/news/july08/MT.htm>>

· **Massachusetts Governor Launches Energy Task Force**

Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick and the leaders of the House and Senate are forming a task force to develop a plan to help citizens manage sky-high energy costs this winter -- in part by getting them to embrace inexpensive energy-saving measures the state is already promoting. The nine-member panel will spend two months considering ways to get people to carpool or take the T or to weatherize their homes. The panel also intends to coordinate with community organizations to create safety nets for people who cannot afford to heat their homes. — **Boston Globe, July 24, 2008**

Read more at:

http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2008/07/24/governor_launches_energy_task_force/
<http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2008/07/24/governor_launches_energy_task_force/>

In the News ...

· **Advocates for Poor Want State to Hurry on Energy Aid**

Minnesota is expected to receive about \$875,000 in energy assistance funds, the state Commerce Department said Wednesday.

While the money comes from a \$26.7 million federal grant, those who work locally with scores of poor families are worried that the state won't dispense it quickly enough to help keep the lights on. More than 400 families have been turned away at the St. Paul-based Community Action Partnership of Ramsey and Washington Counties since mid-April because the nonprofit didn't have the funds to help pay heating and electric bills. "I wish it were more. This is a big deal, and they need this money now," Catherine Fair, Community Action's energy assistance director, said Wednesday. "Winter isn't the only time people in Minnesota need help with their basic needs." — **Minneapolis Star-Tribune, July 2, 2008**

Read more at:

http://www.startribune.com/local/stpaul/22847274.html?location_refer=Most%20Emailed:Homepage:8 <http://www.startribune.com/local/stpaul/22847274.html?location_refer=Most%20Emailed:Homepage:8>

· **More Utility Bills Going Unpaid**

More people are falling behind on their utility bills and the amounts they owe are increasing, according to New York state officials, Rochester Gas and Electric Corp. and charitable organizations. Also disturbing to charitable groups is the number of middle-income earners coming in — people who never before have had to ask for help. In the Rochester area during the first three months of the

year, RG&E saw a 6.4 percent increase in residential accounts at least 60 days in arrears, the state Department of Public Service said. — **Rochester (NY) Democrat and Chronicle, July 3, 2008**

Read more at:

<http://www.democratandchronicle.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080703/BUSINESS/807030369/1001> <<http://www.democratandchronicle.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080703/BUSINESS/807030369/1001>>

· **Brace for Rising Heating Costs**

Along with the cold, this coming winter will bring increased heating expenses. “Gas and food are just two of the problems. This winter, heating costs will reach record highs,” Maureen Sorbet from Michigan’s Department of Human Services said. Mark Wolfe, executive director of the National Energy Assistance Directors’ Association (NEADA), said average costs for the winter heating season will reach about \$1,114 which is 14.6 percent higher than last year’s amount of \$972. The projected heating costs for the winter according to NEADA, are, heating oil at \$2,593, natural gas at \$978, propane at \$1,967 and electricity at \$875. Neil Gamson from the Department of Energy said he thought heating oil would rise about \$700 this winter. — **Petoskey (MI) News-Review, July 3, 2008**

Read more at:

<http://www.petoskeynews.com/articles/2008/07/03/news/doc486cbf48963c7484527481.txt> <<http://www.petoskeynews.com/articles/2008/07/03/news/doc486cbf48963c7484527481.txt>>

· **Pennsylvania PUC’s Consumer Services Director Honored**

Mitch Miller of the Public Utility Commission has been helping low-income energy customers for 25 years, and now he has an award to hang on his wall. Miller, director of the Bureau of Consumer Services for the PUC, was the 2008 recipient of the National Energy and Utility Affordability Consortium Achievement Award. It was presented at a recent conference in Denver by Cindy Datig, director of the Dollar Energy Fund in Pittsburgh. “For more than 25 years, Mitch has worked tirelessly in attempting to balance the needs of residential utility customers and the utility service providers,” Datig said. — **Harrisburg (PA) Patriot-News, July 7, 2008**

Read more at:

http://www.pennlive.com/midstate/index.ssf/2008/07/pucs_mitch_miller_honored.html <http://www.pennlive.com/midstate/index.ssf/2008/07/pucs_mitch_miller_honored.html>

· **Heating Oil Season Could Turn Out More Expensive**

With the summer’s heat and humidity in full swing, it’s tough to think about planning for home heating for the coming winter. But that’s exactly what area heating oil dealers are doing. The coming winter season looks to be a brutal one for the consumer: Heating oil prices are nearly double what they were last year at this time. — **Pottstown (PA) Mercury, July 9, 2008**

Read more at:

http://www.pottstownmercury.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=19839532&BRD=1674&PAG=461&dept_id=18041&rfi=6 <http://www.pottstownmercury.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=19839532&BRD=1674&PAG=461&dept_id=18041&rfi=6>

Governors Call for Boost in Home Heating Aid

Governors from across New England, warning that some families may have to choose between food or warmth this winter, have called for a sharp boost in federal home heating aid. The governors, meeting in Boston on Wednesday, said they are sending letters to President Bush, the presidential candidates, U.S. House and Senate leaders and their congressional delegations asking for an increase in the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. New Hampshire Gov. John Lynch said home heating oil prices have nearly doubled in the past year and are approaching \$5 a gallon in some areas. ... Lynch's worries were echoed by other governors, who said the Northeast, with its cold winters and reliance on oil heat, is particularly vulnerable to rising energy costs. — **Associated Press, July 10, 2008**

Read more at:

<http://www.star-telegram.com/462/story/751863.html> <<http://www.star-telegram.com/462/story/751863.html>>

Utility Shut-offs Jump

Electric and natural-gas utilities in Colorado and nationwide say they are shutting off more customers this year because of delinquent bills. Amid surging energy and gasoline prices, the disconnections are extending beyond low-income households. — **Denver Post, July 10, 2008**

Read more at:

http://origin.denverpost.com/headlines/ci_9833068 <http://origin.denverpost.com/headlines/ci_9833068>

Soon, Electric Heat Could Be Cheaper Than Oil

When it comes to winter heating, people who use electricity have traditionally burned the largest holes in their pockets. But with increases in the price of fuel oil making larger leaps over electricity rates in the past few years, energy officials and economists are wondering if this will be the year heating oil becomes more expensive than electric heat in Connecticut. It's possible.

Retail fuel oil prices in Connecticut are nearly double what they were this time last year, averaging \$4.73 a gallon in the Hartford area this month and even more statewide, according to a survey conducted by the state's Office of Policy and Management. Electric heat, which is used by about 10 percent of Connecticut households, is expected to cost about 12 percent more this winter than last. — **Hartford (CT) Courant, July 15, 2008**

Read more at:

<http://www.courant.com/business/custom/consumer/hc-heating0715.artjul15,0,425737.story> <<http://www.courant.com/business/custom/consumer/hc-heating0715.artjul15,0,425737.story>>

Xcel Set to Cut Power to 47,000

Xcel Energy estimates it will shut off 47,000 Colorado customers for delinquent bills during the second and third quarters of this year, a staggering 140 percent increase over the same period in 2005, according to regulatory filings.

With energy costs and customer shutoffs soaring, advocates for the poor are scrambling to find additional funding to assist low-income households with their electricity and heating bills this winter.

Utilities nationwide are turning off more nonpaying customers amid a sluggish economy and surging food, gasoline and power costs. — **Denver Post, July 16, 2008**

Read more at:

http://www.denverpost.com/commented/ci_9892241?source=commented-news <http://www.denverpost.com/commented/ci_9892241?source=commented-news>

· **Officials Mull Aid to Help People Pay Their Utility Bills**

Colorado Gov. Bill Ritter and lawmakers are discussing how to help the estimated 72,000 Xcel Energy customers projected to have their utilities shut off this year. Escalating energy prices coupled with steep jumps in food prices and a record number of home foreclosures have strained pocketbooks.

For instance, as of May 4, one of every eight Xcel customers in Colorado -- nearly 200,000 households -- was 30 days or more behind in paying their utility bills, according to regulatory filings with the Public Utilities Commission. Xcel serves 1.6 million gas and electric customers in the state.

This year's projected shut-offs are 33 percent higher than 2007, said Xcel spokesman Tom Henley. "Those are high numbers and are very concerning," said Ritter spokesman Evan Dreyer. "Governor Ritter and lawmakers are now starting to look at what strategies we can put in place to, first, make people aware of existing assistance programs and, second, examine whether we need to provide additional dollars to those programs. — **Denver Rocky Mountain News, July 16, 2008**

Read more at:

<http://www.rockymountainnews.com/news/2008/jul/16/officials-mull-aid-to-help-people-pay-their/> <<http://www.rockymountainnews.com/news/2008/jul/16/officials-mull-aid-to-help-people-pay-their/>>

· **Natural Gas Consumers Brace for Rate Surge**

Get ready to pay a lot more to stay warm this winter. Utility companies and state officials warned consumers of historic increases coming this fall, as rising natural-gas prices could drive bills up by 35 percent or more. NW Natural, the largest natural-gas company in the state, said it expects to increase rates 35 percent to 40 percent.

That would drive the average household monthly bill — which currently is about \$75 — to more than \$100. NW Natural's president, Gregg Kantor, said the expected increase will be the largest in natural-gas prices in 35 years. Creating the increase are substantial regional demand and tight supplies, said Northwest Gas Association executive director Dan Kirschner. — **Salem (OR) Statesman Journal, July 16, 2008**

Read more at:

<http://www.statesmanjournal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080716/NEWS/807160442/1001> <<http://www.statesmanjournal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080716/NEWS/807160442/1001>>

· **Winter Could Test Energy Math**

The next blow from high energy prices could come in the dead of winter. Utilities and industry analysts estimate it will cost families 30 to 50 percent more to heat their homes with natural gas this winter. Families who use heating oil could face increases of between 50 and 100 percent. That is

altering the math for consumers and energy companies alike.

Some worry the higher heating costs could be the tipping point for family budgets that are struggling to absorb higher food and gasoline prices. Mark Wolfe, executive director of the National Energy Assistance Directors' Association, which represents state officials who administer energy relief funds, says many New England families could run a tab of \$1,600 to \$1,700 a month to cover heating oil, electricity and gasoline costs next winter. — *Wall Street Journal*, July 18, 2008

Read more at:

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB121633904671763931.html?mod=googlenews_wsj <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB121633904671763931.html?mod=googlenews_wsj>

· **Sweating High Heating Bills This Winter**

Western New Yorkers are hurting from unseasonably high oil prices this summer, but we “ain’t seen nothing yet” according to Sen. Charles Schumer. With the price of oil hitting a record high \$146 a barrel this week and the price of home heating oil through the roof, Schumer held a phone conference Wednesday afternoon to discuss the impact this will have on heating bills state-wide this winter. He also provided tips, and announced pending legislative initiatives, to ease heating costs for upstate New York homeowners. — *Dunkirk (NY) Observer*, July 18, 2008

Read more at:

<http://www.observertoday.com/page/content.detail/id/505931.html?nav=5047> <<http://www.observertoday.com/page/content.detail/id/505931.html?nav=5047>>

· **Pennsylvania Turns its Eyes Toward the Sun for Energy**

For a state with energy-production roots drilling deep into the coal mines and oil fields, the time has arrived for a heavenward look to try to harness the power of the sun.

Gov. Rendell last week signed a bill here dedicating \$650 million to the development of alternative and renewable energy, with a whopping 28 percent going to solar energy.

Environmentalists and energy-policy experts say the fund is a significant investment in clean energy and will boost Pennsylvania's profile as a leader in emerging energy technology. The bill makes a historic investment in solar energy, an emerging technology that Rendell administration officials compare to the status of wind energy six years ago. — *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 18, 2008

Read more at:

http://www.philly.com/philly/news/20080718_Pa__turns_its_eyes_toward_the_sun_for_energy.html <http://www.philly.com/philly/news/20080718_Pa__turns_its_eyes_toward_the_sun_for_energy.html>

· **Officials Anticipate Heat Price Spike**

With the cost of heating homes in the Northeast expected to be the highest in history during the coming winter, federal, state and local officials are planning for the anticipated increase in those seeking help to heat their homes.

In Washington, Sen. John F. Kerry introduced legislation he authored — the Emergency Energy

Assistance Act of 2008 — that would double federal funding of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) to \$5.1 billion, increase the maximum level of the earned income tax credit by \$300, and increase the Weatherization Assistance Program by \$522.8 million, to a total of \$750 million.

President Bush's proposal would cut LIHEAP funding by 22 percent from last winter's levels, and eliminate funding for the weatherization program that helps people winterize their homes. "We're not going to let him do that," Kerry said. — **Pittsfield (MA) Berkshire Eagle, July 22, 2008**

Read more at:

http://www.berkshireeagle.com/ci_9956580 <http://www.berkshireeagle.com/ci_9956580>

· **Utilities Fund for Poor Petering Out**

A state program to help poor people pay their utility bills is nearly broke, forcing it to limit the amounts it gives to Nevadans in need, just as that need reaches its highest point so far this decade.

The Welfare and Supportive Services Division's Energy Assistance Program has gone from a reserve of \$17.5 million only four years ago to a greatly thinned bank account of about \$2.4 million. It has been spending more than it has taken in two years in a row, and applications were up 11 percent in the past year, with 26 percent more applications this June than during the same month of 2007.

"We're at the other end of the spectrum and ... we've exhausted earlier resources," said Lori Wilson, who oversees policy and budget issues for the energy program. "We have to spread the money a little thinner over a greater population." — **Las Vegas (NV) Sun, July 23, 2008**

Read more at:

<http://www.lasvegassun.com/news/2008/jul/23/utilities-fund-poor-petering-out/> <<http://www.lasvegassun.com/news/2008/jul/23/utilities-fund-poor-petering-out/>>

· **Fuel Cost Now Driving Up Electric Bills**

Rising energy prices are now squeezing consumers from a different direction: Their utility bills.

Consumers from California to New York are facing rate increases of as much as 30 percent.

Average homeowners' electric bills are now heading towards \$70 to \$80 a month in some states. And low- and middle-income residents are having trouble paying their bills as evidenced by a large increase in disconnect notices.

On a national basis, the federal Energy Information Administration (EIA) estimates that electric bills will rise 5.2 percent this year. But next year, they're expected to rise 9.8 percent. — **Christian Science Monitor, July 25, 2008**

Read more at:

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/0725/p01s10-usec.html> <<http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/0725/p01s10-usec.html>>

· **Rising Electric Bills a Shock to Wallet**

Margaret Alvarez didn't have enough money to pay last month's electric bill. The Plant City resident turned to an energy-assistance program administered by the county and received \$150. It wasn't enough. She borrowed another \$100 from her ex-husband and paid the bill in full. What worries her now is this month's electric bill. Paying it won't be easy for Alvarez, whose main source of income is a disability check of \$639 a month. — **Tampa (FL) Tribune, July 29, 2008**

Read more at:

<http://www2.tbo.com/content/2008/jul/29/bz-rising-electric-bills-a-shock-to-wallet/> <<http://www2.tbo.com/content/2008/jul/29/bz-rising-electric-bills-a-shock-to-wallet/>>

· **'Wood Warms' Aims to Cut Fuel Costs**

The state has embarked on a firewood subsidy aimed at getting split cord wood into the sheds of low- and moderate-income Vermonters. In their frantic search for relief from skyrocketing heating oil prices, state officials have turned to the woods, where lumber harvested from Vermont forests will be used to fill woodstoves around the state.

"Wood Warms," a hodgepodge of initiatives unveiled by the Douglas Administration last month, comes as the state braces for what many fear will be an unparalleled home heating crisis. — **Barre (VT) Times/Montpelier (VT) Argus, July 31, 2008**

Read more at:

<http://www.timesargus.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080731/NEWS/570877419/1002/NEWS01> <<http://www.timesargus.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080731/NEWS/570877419/1002/NEWS01>>

Editorials ...

· **Rising Heating Costs Spell Looming Disaster**

In Vermont, it's never too early to start thinking about how you're going to heat your home during the coming winter. The question takes on a renewed urgency this year because heating oil prices are already running 60 percent above what they were a year ago with no relief in sight.

The first order of business is to make sure that families can afford to keep warm this winter. With signs that our economy is mired in a slowdown and the state reporting its highest unemployment rate in 14 years, the number of families needing heating assistance is likely to be greater this year. It is encouraging to see elected representatives in Montpelier and Washington already at work to address this looming problem. — **Burlington (VT) Free Press, July 1, 2008**

Read more at:

<http://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080701/OPINION/807010303/1006> <<http://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080701/OPINION/807010303/1006>>

· **Heating Aid Expected to be in Big Demand**

On a beautiful New England summer's day, no one really wants to think about next winter's home-heating bills – especially with the price of energy at record levels these days. But that would be good advice for some area residents since today is the first day that priority families or individuals can

apply for energy assistance through the federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, commonly referred to as LIHEAP. ...While December may seem a long time away, waiting until the arrival of winter is not advisable, according to local administrators of the program – especially this year, given the demand for fuel assistance is expected to be strong. — **Nashua (NH) Telegraph, July 1, 2008**

Read more at:

<http://www.nashuatelegraph.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080701/OPINION01/804857768/-1/opinion> <<http://www.nashuatelegraph.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080701/OPINION01/804857768/-1/opinion>>

· **It's Hot Now, But Winter Fuel Bills are Coming**

Summer is about ways to stay cool -- eating ice cream, walking on the beach and wearing flip-flops. But it's also the time to think about how costly it will be to stay warm this winter. While little can be done about oil prices, looming monster bills should focus much-needed attention on efficiency and conservation plans. We can all get sweaters, better thermostats and more weather-stripping to survive.

But when we're huddled in that one warm room come late fall, we're going to need to demand that national and state leaders get serious about reducing our dependence on imported oil.

Today's punishing gasoline prices are merely a harbinger of the additional waves of misery the never-cresting price of crude can bring to our region. — **Melville (NY) Newsday, July 6, 2008**

Read more at:

<http://www.newsday.com/news/opinion/ny-vpfuel065752964jul06,0,7866617.story> <<http://www.newsday.com/news/opinion/ny-vpfuel065752964jul06,0,7866617.story>>

· **In a Hot Spot**

The Fourth of July is a time for patriotism and having fun. Unlike Christmas, it's not a holiday when Americans think of giving. Maybe it should be.

The *Times Record News* reported in a Saturday article that this past June was 6 degrees hotter than the 30-year average. We had 14 days in the month above 100 degrees. The heat stats for May weren't much better. Combine that with the fact that electricity bills are reaching new highs because of rising power plant fuel costs, and you have a perfect storm of misery for North Texans who don't have a lot of money.

Help agencies see ever-growing numbers of people coming in with electric bills they can't pay. These people are not deadbeats adverse to working and paying their own way. — **Wichita Falls (TX) Times Record News, July 6, 2008**

Read more at:

<http://www.timesrecordnews.com/news/2008/jul/06/our-opinion-hot-spot/> <<http://www.timesrecordnews.com/news/2008/jul/06/our-opinion-hot-spot/>>

· **"Fuel Poverty" Will Weigh More Heavily as Nation Drifts on Energy Policy**

Use the term "fuel poverty" in England and a few other countries, and people know exactly what you mean. Fuel poverty is when a household spends 10 percent or more of its disposable income on electricity, gas or other fuel to keep warm. The term was coined by Dr. Brenda Boardman of Oxford University's Environmental Change Institute in her 1988 book, "Fuel Poverty."

When one's income is low, or when prices are high, fuel poverty occurs.

As Americans grapple with \$4-plus gasoline, rising home heating oil prices and soon to be uncapped electricity rates, "fuel poverty" will become part of the economic and political dialogue here, too. It is hard to say how many people in the United States are, or soon will be, fuel poor. —

Allentown (PA) Morning Call, July 8, 2008

Read more at:

<http://www.mcall.com/news/opinion/all-edit2.6493058jul08,0,3020353.story> <<http://www.mcall.com/news/opinion/all-edit2.6493058jul08,0,3020353.story>>

· **Preparing for Snow in July**

Even in midsummer's heat, residents of the eight million or so households with oil-fired furnaces — more than three-fourths of them in the Northeast — are worried about winter. The price of heating oil has jumped almost 40 percent this year. Unless prices dive, which seems unlikely, many customers will face the double-whammy of higher fuel prices for their homes and cars.

People with money in the bank were able to contract months ago for next winter's oil at then-lower prices. But millions of cash-strapped families will need help. With heating oil now at \$4.50 a gallon, compared with \$2.50 a year ago, a typical New England homeowner using about 600 gallons a year would see the winter fuel bill rise to \$2,700, or nearly \$500 a month during the coldest months.

State and local governments can provide some emergency help. But these governments are also strapped for cash, which means that only Congress can provide relief on the scale that is likely to be needed. — **New York Times, July 9, 2008**

Read more at:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/09/opinion/09wed3.html?ref=opinion> <<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/09/opinion/09wed3.html?ref=opinion>>

· **Federal Home Heating Assistance Much Needed**

For many, summer is an unlikely time to prepare for winter heating oil season. But for those who could barely afford to pay for heat last winter, the prognosis for the coming winter isn't reassuring with oil prices regularly topping record levels.

We welcomed the news Thursday, July 10 of Sen. Judd Gregg's support for bipartisan legislation to add \$2.5 billion for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program nearly doubling the current level of funding for the program. That increase will likely be needed.

On Wednesday, New Hampshire Gov. John Lynch and Maine Gov. John Baldacci joined fellow New England governors to deliver a stern warning — if there isn't a sharp boost on federal home heating aid, more families than ever will be faced with gut-wrenching choice between food or warmth this

winter. — *Hampton (NH) Union*, July 11, 2008

Read more at:

<http://www.seacoastonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080711/OPINION/807110350/-1/NEWS10> <<http://www.seacoastonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080711/OPINION/807110350/-1/NEWS10>>

· **A Crisis on the Horizon**

Even as the thermometer hovers near 90 degrees this summer, advocates and elected officials are looking ahead to the looming heating season and the crisis they say winter will bring. “This is going to be the worst winter that we’ve ever seen unless something drastic happens with the price of oil,” said Bruce Morell, executive director of People Acting in Community Endeavors. “Every year we say it’s going to be a bad winter ... and people struggle through it, and they make it through it,” he said. “I’m not sure about this year.” The average price for a gallon of home heating oil in Massachusetts was \$4.71 as of July 8, up more than \$2 from this time last year, according to the state Department of Energy Resources. — *New Bedford (MA) Standard-Times*, July 13, 2008

Read more at:

<http://www.southcoasttoday.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080713/NEWS/807130364/-1/TOWN1001> <<http://www.southcoasttoday.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080713/NEWS/807130364/-1/TOWN1001>>

· **Help Available for Cooling**

A limited amount of summer cooling assistance funds will be made available across Oklahoma starting Monday. The funds are to be distributed via the federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, administered through the Oklahoma Department of Human Services. The funds are designed to help low-income households that are vulnerable to summer-heat stresses.

OKDHS will begin taking applications Monday and will continue until all allocated funds are depleted. OKDHS has approximately \$3 million in federal funds for this year’s summer cooling program in Oklahoma. — *Muskogee (OK) Phoenix*, July 13, 2008

Read more at:

http://www.muskogee phoenix.com/local/local_story_195005414.htmlhttp://www.muskogee phoenix.com/local/local_story_195005414.html <http://www.muskogee phoenix.com/local/local_story_195005414.htmlhttp://www.muskogee phoenix.com/local/local_story_195005414.html>

· **Wanted: A Sense of Urgency**

An op-ed that appeared in this week’s Rutland Herald and Times Argus took the state’s leadership to task for failing to follow through on its promised E-State initiative.

According to Lawrence Keyes, a principal with Microdesign Consulting Inc. in Colchester, and chair of the Vermont Software Developer’s Alliance outreach committee, the governor’s proposal won’t, as promised, put us ahead of other jurisdictions, but will barely catch us up ... if it gets done at all. It’s not just Jim Douglas; Keyes doesn’t see any urgency from Gaye Symington, and Anthony Pollina apparently hasn’t even noticed that it might be an issue.

If broadband were the only issue where the state is talking a great game but failing to act, it might be less of a concern. But it's exactly the same on renewable energy. — **Barre (VT) Times/Montpelier (VT) Argus, July 13, 2008**

Read more at:

<http://www.timesargus.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080713/OPINION01/807130301/1021/OPINION01> <<http://www.timesargus.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080713/OPINION01/807130301/1021/OPINION01>>

· **Your Neighbor Could be Next to Lose Electricity**

Estimates that Xcel Energy will cut off utilities for some 47,000 delinquent Colorado customers is an indicator of tough economic times and a harbinger of trouble to come. We hope the distressing uptick in disconnections — which are expected to rise by 84 percent over 2005 — also are a call to action for those in a position to help struggling residents. It seems things are going to get worse before they get better.

On Wednesday, the government released figures showing the Consumer Price Index surged by 1.1 percent in June — the fastest rate in 17 years. Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke told Congress on Wednesday that the U.S. economy, troubled by a housing slump, credit squeeze and job losses, is also likely to sustain inflation that “seems likely to move temporarily higher in the near term.”

It has been the conventional wisdom in Colorado that this state's economy typically isn't hit as hard as other parts of the country when it slides into a recession, or at least that may have been the case in the recent past. But it doesn't mean the state is unaffected. — **Denver Post, July 16, 2008**

Read more at:

http://www.denverpost.com/opinion/ci_9901378 <http://www.denverpost.com/opinion/ci_9901378>

· **Tight or Tighten Up**

Those controlling the public purse strings are often exhorted — correctly — to tighten up government spending. But the federal assistance program that pays for poor and middle income people to tighten up their houses against the cold is not where such fiscal restraint should come. ... Many who live in northern-tier states like Maine are looking for a silver bullet heating source to combat the high oil or gas bills they anticipate this winter. There is a feeding frenzy of sorts on pellet stoves, firewood and new natural gas connections to homes.

Yet home improvement experts — such as BDN columnist Tom Gocze — argue that a more prudent focus for a homeowner is to improve the building's capacity to hold heat. That means more roof, wall, floor and foundation insulation, caulking or applying spray foam to cracks and door and window seals, and upgrading windows and doors where financially feasible. ... Improving a home to more effectively retain heat is conservatism at its most basic.

Helping poorer people save that heat makes it compassionate conservatism. — **Bangor (ME) Daily News, July 16, 2008**

Read more at:

<http://bangornews.com/news/t/viewpoints.aspx?articleid=167144&zoneid=34>
<http://bangornews.com/news/t/viewpoints.aspx?articleid=167144&zoneid=34> <<http://bangornews.com/news/t/viewpoints.aspx?articleid=167144&zoneid=34>>

· **Some Reality, Please**

If the Senate could summon some wisdom, it would interrupt its mud wrestling over partisan placebos for the gas crisis long enough to debate something real: Emergency help for the nation's poorest families who face skyrocketing home heating costs this winter.

The Democratic leadership is wisely aiming for a procedural vote in the next day or two that would free up time to debate a badly needed measure to double the existing Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program to \$5.1 billion. With 50 co-sponsors, including 12 Republicans, the measure is a must-pass priority if Congress is to have any credibility in facing the energy crisis with something more than the hot air of campaign rhetoric. — *New York Times*, July 25, 2008

Read more at:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/25/opinion/25fri3.html?ref=opinion> <<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/25/opinion/25fri3.html?ref=opinion>>

· **Arizona Deserves Federal Funds for Energy Bills**

The federal government must realize that although Arizona is not a cold-weather state, low-income households deserve the same kind of help with energy bills in the summer that residents of Northern and Eastern states receive in the winter.

Apparently the fact that residents of Arizona and other Sun Belt states pay significantly to cool their homes in the summer has been lost on Washington

The Department of Health and Human Services' formula for distributing funds from the Low Income Energy Assistance Program, or LIHEAP, has for years favored cold-weather states. "Arizona receives the least amount of any state in the country on a per-household basis," said Cynthia Zwick, executive director of the Arizona Community Action Association, a Phoenix-based group that helps fight poverty. — *Tucson (AZ) Arizona Daily Star*, July 25, 2008

Read more at:

<http://www.azstarnet.com/business/249764> <<http://www.azstarnet.com/business/249764>>

· **More Money Needed for Low-Income Heating Aid**

Even as the U.S. Senate considers a substantial expansion of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, the state government continues to sit on a \$9 million program surplus that could help thousands of low-income residents catch up on their overdue utility bills before the next heating season.

Unlike many other Northeastern states, Pennsylvania ended its LIHEAP season March 21, rather than extending it in the face of rising unemployment and soaring energy costs.

About half of the states conduct their programs year-round. Many others (including Pennsylvania in previous years) extend their seasons in order to ensure that utilities do not cut off service to low-income people. — **Towanda (PA) Daily Review, July 27, 2008**

Read more at:

http://www.thedailyreview.com/articles/2008/07/27/editorial/tw_review.20080727.a.pg4.tw27edit_s1.1838757_edi.txt <http://www.thedailyreview.com/articles/2008/07/27/editorial/tw_review.20080727.a.pg4.tw27edit_s1.1838757_edi.txt>

· **Increase Heating Aid This Winter for Poor**

The president, who earlier this year hadn't heard that gasoline prices were headed to \$4 a gallon, apparently hasn't heard that heating oil prices are headed toward \$5 a gallon. With what may be the highest home heating costs on record, President Bush's budget proposes cutting heating aid for the poor by 22 percent for the coming year. ...

Combined with the higher costs for gasoline and food, the heating bill is expected to break even more family budgets than those of the 98,000 state households who received aid last winter through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. ...

Fortunately, with the Democrats in control of both houses of Congress and the need for heating aid so evident to everyone but the president, it is far more likely LIHEAP's budget will be increased, rather than cut. — **New Haven (CT) Register, July 28, 2008**

Read more at:

http://www.nhregister.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=19872590&BRD=1281&PAG=461&dept_id=635087&rfi=6 <http://www.nhregister.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=19872590&BRD=1281&PAG=461&dept_id=635087&rfi=6>

Commentaries ...

· **Rendell Wrong to Halt Heat Funds**

The rising price of gas, food and other goods and services has left Pennsylvanians feeling the pinch of a much tighter budget — especially the elderly and lower-income families.

So it's very puzzling why Gov. Ed Rendell decided to leave more than a half-million households facing shutoff of their electricity when the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program stopped giving assistance earlier this year, despite the fact that there is more than \$9 million in the fund.

Although the program has seen the highest number of families seeking assistance in 16 years, Rendell decided to remain steadfast in his closure date of March 21.

This was done despite the fact that 48 states keep their programs open much longer, and many continue to run the program until all funds have been completely exhausted. — The Rt. Rev. Council Nedd II in the **Lebanon (PA) Daily News, July 8, 2008**

Read more at:

http://www.ldnews.com/opinion/ci_9817483 <http://www.ldnews.com/opinion/ci_9817483>

· **Releasing Energy Aid Funds Will Save Lives**

Even in a good year, only 6 percent of eligible low-income households, or about 30,000 of the nearly 500,000 who are eligible, receive emergency energy assistance during Arizona's excessive summer heat to help with utility bills.

This year, that number will drop by nearly 4,500 because of an administrative error at the Department of Health and Human Services that caused a reduction of \$1 million in emergency assistance funds from the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program.

On a national level, more than \$10 million in funding will be affected because of the DHHS error. Called leveraging funds, states receive these critical dollars as a "bonus" for finding other funding sources to assist in addressing the problem. Arizona consistently receives the \$1 million bonus and is among the four states most severely impacted by the loss. — Cynthia Zwick in the *Tucson (AZ) Citizen*, **July 23, 2008**

Read more at:

<http://www.tucsoncitizen.com/daily/opinion/91637.php> <<http://www.tucsoncitizen.com/daily/opinion/91637.php>>

· **Oil Speculation and Republican Cynicism**

Once again the Republican filibuster machine has blocked a vote on legislation desperately needed to help solve our energy crisis and lower the high cost of fuel.

The Democratic-sponsored bill (S 3268) was intended to curb the ability of speculators to manipulate the oil market. It would also close a loophole that allows speculators trading on the London oil market to escape scrutiny by U.S. regulators.

Experts have testified that wrongful speculation has vastly increased the price of oil and that if the bill was passed and signed by Bush, it would immediately lower the price of gas.

While the Democrats have been trying to pass legislation that would have an immediate effect, Republicans have been trying to get Congress to open-up vast areas of the continental shelf and all of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to drilling. The Republicans' proposals would not have any impact for decades, if ever. The Republicans know this. Their only reason for this policy is political. — Jack LeMoult in the *Xenia (OH) Green County Dailies*, **July 29, 2008**

Read more at:

<http://xeniagazette.1upmonitor.com/main.asp?SectionID=17&SubSectionID=452&ArticleID=160399&TM=80533.04> <<http://xeniagazette.1upmonitor.com/main.asp?SectionID=17&SubSectionID=452&ArticleID=160399&TM=80533.04>>

members of the NLIEC, its supporters, and individuals interested in low-income energy assistance issues. Some of the links to published news releases, news stories, editorials and opinion columns cited in the

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