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**NLIEC NEWS, August 31, 2008**

**Within the Energy Assistance Community ...**

▪ **Dollar Energy Initiates New Utility Assistance Fund in West Virginia**

The Dollar Energy Fund, a long-time energy assistance provider in Pennsylvania and member of the

National Low Income Energy Consortium Board of Directors, has initiated a utility assistance program in West Virginia. Beginning October 1, the West Virginia Utility Assistance Program will help low-income families pay their utility bills. In partnership with the Dollar Energy Fund and six major utilities, the program expects to assist up to 1,500 people during its first year. The program was made possible through the assistance and encouragement of West Virginia Governor Joe Manchin, the utility industry, the Public Service Commission and the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources. Since October 1, 2007, the Dollar Energy Fund's Hardship Program has distributed more than \$3.7 million in utility assistance grants to 10,028 low-income customers of 14 utility companies in Pennsylvania. The fund also administers Customer Assistance Programs for several of that state's utilities. — *LIHEAP Clearinghouse*, August 21, 2008

Read more at:

<http://www.liheap.ncat.org/news/aug08/WV.htm> <<http://www.liheap.ncat.org/news/aug08/WV.htm>>

▪ **ACEEE Introduces New State Energy Efficiency Policy Resource**

The American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy has unveiled a new internet resource for state policymakers and energy efficiency advocates. The new site serves as an easy-to-use online database of energy efficiency policies in the states, searchable by state or by policy. The database covers appliance standards, building codes, clean distributed generation policies, tax incentives, vehicle policies and a host of utility-related energy efficiency information. The site currently covers information for most of the leading states and, ultimately, will cover policies for all states and be expanded to cover state climate policies and smart growth initiatives. "States are increasingly adopting and implementing new energy policies as a result of high energy prices and increasing concern over global climate change," said ACEEE's Executive Director Steven Nadel. "ACEEE seeks to provide a comprehensive survey of existing state 'best practices' as a resource for policymakers, businesses, concerned citizens, and others in the energy efficiency community." — *ACEEE news release*, August 12, 2008

Read more at:

<http://www.aceee.org/press/0808state.htm> <<http://www.aceee.org/press/0808state.htm>>

▪ **Operation New View: Community Action Agency Conducting Second Weatherization Day**

Their one-day community-involvement campaign to weatherize homes was such a big success last year that Operation New View: Community Action Agency in Dubuque is reaching out to eastern

lowans yet again. In October 2007, the agency partnered with several other community organizations to conduct an event called the Dubuque Weatherization Challenge. This project was a one-day blitz which used community volunteers organized into six-member teams to perform simple weatherization measures on the homes of elderly, disabled and low-income people. In all, 340 volunteers weatherized 96 homes on that day. Agency executive director Tom Stovall said they would be conducting the project again on October 25, 2008 with a goal to weatherize another 100 homes. Further information about the program is available at a new website for the event: [www.keepdubuquewarm.org](http://www.keepdubuquewarm.org) <<http://www.keepdubuquewarm.org>> .

## In Washington ...

### • **White House Threatens Veto on Energy Assistance**

The White House late Tuesday again threatened a veto of a Senate bill to supplement a government program that helps poor families pay the energy costs of heating and cooling their houses, even though it's unlikely the bill will be brought up for another vote this year. Despite strong bipartisan support for the bill, which would add an extra \$2.5 billion in fiscal 2008 appropriations to the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, or LIHEAP, efforts to enact the legislation were derailed last week when the Senate could not muster enough support to take it up. Repeating the threat first issued July 26 is an effective warning to the House, where Vermont Democrat Peter Welch and others are trying to bring a companion measure to the floor in September. A projected shortfall in LIHEAP funding has caused near panic in the Northeast, as residents brace themselves and their wallets to handle skyrocketing heating oil prices that are expected to outpace last year's per-gallon rate by 50 percent. — *Congressional Quarterly Today*, August 5, 2008

Read more at:

<http://www.cqpolitics.com/wmspage.cfm?docid=news-000002934934> <<http://www.cqpolitics.com/wmspage.cfm?docid=news-000002934934>>

### • **Analysis: Veto Threat on Funding for Low-Income Heating Assistance Ignores Serious Need**

The Senate recently considered a bill (S. 3186) to provide \$2.5 billion in additional funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) to offset the sharp rise in energy prices this winter. President Bush, however, has threatened to veto the bill, arguing that the additional funding is not needed and that the bill would increase the deficit. Data on rising energy prices sharply contradict the President's claim that current LIHEAP funding is sufficient. Without additional funding, large numbers of low-income Americans will suffer extensive hardship this winter. As for the deficit, the White House's inconsistency on this point is striking: the President complains that a \$2.5 billion bill providing energy assistance to poor families will unacceptably enlarge the deficit, yet he opposes efforts in Congress to offset the cost of \$64 billion in requested tax-cut extensions; instead, the \$64 billion would be added to the deficit. — *Center for Budget and Policy Priorities*, August 11, 2008

Read more at:

<http://www.cbpp.org/8-11-08bud.htm> <<http://www.cbpp.org/8-11-08bud.htm>>

## In the States ...

### • **Oregon Installs First Highway Solar Project**

In an attempt to spur the spread of solar power, the Oregon Department of Transportation on Thursday unveiled the nation's first solar panel project on a major U.S. highway. At the interchange of Interstate 5 and Interstate 205 near Tualatin, a row of solar panels about five feet wide and two football fields long will start generating electricity by the end of the year. The panels will feed electricity directly to PGE's systemwide grid and account for 28 percent of the energy needed to power lights that illuminate the highway's sweeping interchange at night. — *The (Portland) Oregonian*, August 7, 2008

Read more at:

[http://www.oregonlive.com/environment/index.ssf/2008/08/oregon\\_installs\\_first\\_highway.html](http://www.oregonlive.com/environment/index.ssf/2008/08/oregon_installs_first_highway.html) <[http://www.oregonlive.com/environment/index.ssf/2008/08/oregon\\_installs\\_first\\_highway.html](http://www.oregonlive.com/environment/index.ssf/2008/08/oregon_installs_first_highway.html)>

#### · **Louisiana PSC Approves Energy Emergency**

The Louisiana Public Service Commission has unanimously endorsed Commissioner Foster Campbell's move to declare an "energy emergency" that would allow some low-income residents to defer payment of the increase in their electricity bills over last year's August bill. Campbell says the move is necessary because "some people are struggling," having to choose whether to pay their electricity bills or buy necessities. The declaration is timely because "this is not a normal month for us," with almost a week of 100-plus-degree weather in much of North Louisiana. Declaring an energy emergency enables some customers of Entergy Gulf States, Entergy Louisiana, SWEPCO and Cleco to delay payment on the amount that exceeds what they paid a year ago. — *Opelousas (LA) Daily World*, August 13, 2008

Read more at:

<http://www.dailyworld.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080813/NEWS01/808130311/1002> <<http://www.dailyworld.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080813/NEWS01/808130311/1002>>

#### · **Maine's Governor Releases Energy Plan**

Gov. John Baldacci has announced his short-term plan to help Maine residents cope with high heating costs, a move he said eliminates the need for a special legislative session. ... Also today, Democratic legislative leaders announced the creation of a panel to review current resources and options to determine what may require immediate legislative action, according to the office of House Speaker Glenn Cummings, D-Portland. A bipartisan group of legislative leaders will be asked to review current options for Maine people, hear what is lacking and develop an agenda for action. — *Portland (ME) Press Herald*, August 15, 2008

Read more at:

<http://news.maintoday.com/updates/031610.html> <<http://news.maintoday.com/updates/031610.html>>

#### · **Connecticut Lawmakers Approve Emergency Heating Aid**

Connecticut lawmakers have approved additional heating aid for many state residents, schools and social service agencies, and more help for people trying to cut their energy costs this winter. The Senate voted 33-0 in favor of the first of two bills, setting aside part of an estimated \$75 million state surplus for the Operation Fuel heating assistance program and for heating help for certain elderly residents, nonprofit organizations and schools. It passed the House of Representatives on a 127-0 vote. The \$14 million allocation will let Operation Fuel offer emergency fuel assistance to more

families earning between 150 to 200 percent of the federal poverty level, or a family of four earning \$31,800 to \$42,400 yearly. ... The Senate approved a second bill on a 26-5 vote that provides more funding for furnace and boiler repair and replacement programs. It also sets up a new \$35.5 million energy contingency account for future needs, including special help for households that use electricity to heat their homes. The House approved it on a 118-4 vote. — *Associated Press*, August 23, 2008

Read more at:

[http://www.registercitizen.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=20088575&BRD=1652&PAG=461&dept\\_id=572387&rfi=6](http://www.registercitizen.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=20088575&BRD=1652&PAG=461&dept_id=572387&rfi=6) <[http://www.registercitizen.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=20088575&BRD=1652&PAG=461&dept\\_id=572387&rfi=6](http://www.registercitizen.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=20088575&BRD=1652&PAG=461&dept_id=572387&rfi=6)>

· **Louisiana Frees up \$10 million to Help Consumers With Rising Power Bills**

About 12,700 Louisiana households will get help paying their electricity bills or insulating their homes with \$10 million in state funds to help with people deal with rising utility bills, Gov. Bobby Jindal and Public Service Commissioner Foster Campbell said Monday. The \$10 million from the state Department of Natural Resources will be used to supplement two federal programs administered locally through the Louisiana Housing Finance Agency. The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, a program that helps people pay their utility bills, and the Weatherization Assistance Program, which helps people insulate their homes, will each get \$5 million. — *New Orleans (LA) Times-Picayune*, August 25, 2008

Read more at:

[http://www.nola.com/business/index.ssf/2008/08/state\\_frees\\_up\\_10\\_million\\_to\\_h.html](http://www.nola.com/business/index.ssf/2008/08/state_frees_up_10_million_to_h.html) <[http://www.nola.com/business/index.ssf/2008/08/state\\_frees\\_up\\_10\\_million\\_to\\_h.html](http://www.nola.com/business/index.ssf/2008/08/state_frees_up_10_million_to_h.html)>

**In the News ...**

· **Federal Funds for Low-Income Energy Bills Urged**

Arizona's heat is as "miserable and dangerous" as extremely cold weather in other states, and a boost in federal money for low-income people's energy bills would help the state, Gov. Janet Napolitano said. The governor wrote a letter this week supporting an emergency \$2.5 billion increase in those funds. She addressed it to a member of President Bush's Cabinet who opposes the increase. "Warm-weather states such as Arizona have been historically shortchanged by this program due to a complex and outdated formula that favors cold-weather states," she said. Napolitano and other state officials are seeking an increase in the amount of money from the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, which has seen a dramatic increase in demand as Arizonans struggle to pay their power bills. — *Phoenix (AZ) Arizona Republic*, August 1, 2008

Read more at:

<http://www.azcentral.com/business/articles/2008/08/01/20080801met-liheap0801side-CP.html> <<http://www.azcentral.com/business/articles/2008/08/01/20080801met-liheap0801side-CP.html>>

· **Shaheen Stumps Energy Plan at Heating Oil Firm**

Borderline Fuels Owner Edson Smith said he has faced many residents this year who say they are "tapped out" and "don't know what they're going to do" about affording heating oil this winter. It was

with those concerns in mind that Democratic Senate candidate Jeanne Shaheen visited the facility in the Malley Farm business park Thursday to give a statement about her plans for changing what she called an “energy crisis” the nation currently faces. Energy and the cost of fuel have been a hot topic in the months leading up to the November elections, with legislation for everything from increased LIHEAP (low-income home energy assistance program) funding this winter to comprehensive energy reforms causing a stir among Democrats and Republicans in the U.S. Senate. — *Foster’s Daily Democrat (Dover, NH)*, August 1, 2008

Read more at:

[http://www.fosters.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080801/GJNEWS\\_01/372629255/-1/FOSNEWS](http://www.fosters.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080801/GJNEWS_01/372629255/-1/FOSNEWS) <[http://www.fosters.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080801/GJNEWS\\_01/372629255/-1/FOSNEWS](http://www.fosters.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080801/GJNEWS_01/372629255/-1/FOSNEWS)>

· **Digital Electricity Meters May Not be Financially Smart for Consumers, Report Says**

Electric utilities are pioneering various test programs to give consumers more power over their power rates. Atlantic City Electric hopes to do the same for southern New Jersey. The Mays Landing-based utility is awaiting approval from state regulators to install so-called “smart meters” at all ratepayers’ properties -- about 445,000 customers across eight counties -- over the next four to five years. The smart meters use advanced digital technology and replace the more familiar analog meters that power companies have long used to measure a home or business’ electricity consumption. But a report prepared last month for the state Department of the Public Advocate says New Jersey residents would be forced to pay for an “advanced metering” program that has yet to prove its financial worth over time. — *Press of Atlantic City (NJ)*, August 4, 2008

Read more at:

<http://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/106/story/221159.html> <<http://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/106/story/221159.html>>

· **Heating Oil Spike Has Northeast On Edge**

It’s still hot outside, but Northeasterners are already bracing for the cold. Heating oil prices in the region have almost doubled over last year. Kerosene and natural gas are up, too. Local officials are preparing for what they fear could be a drawn-out crisis this winter. Outside the Essex County government buildings in Elizabethtown, N.Y., employees Lee Ann Pierce and Katie Cariffe are thinning the flower gardens. But they’re already thinking about staying warm in the winter months. Pierce wishes she could buy a wood stove or move to Florida. She spent \$2,000 for heating oil last year, and she doesn’t know how she’ll afford almost twice that amount this year. — *National Public Radio*, August 5, 2008

Read more at:

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=93289400> <<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=93289400>>

· **Home Energy Prices Are Expected to Soar**

In a season of roller-coaster energy costs, the drop in oil and natural gas prices in recent days was greeted as good news. But they remain so high that experts are predicting that heating bills this winter will far exceed those of last year. “People are going to have a tough time,” said David Moody of Flynn’s Oil, a small fuel oil distributor in Exeter, N.H. Even after a precipitous decline from its peak

in early July, the price of natural gas is still 11 percent above where it was last winter. Heating oil is 36 percent higher, with the government projecting that the costs of both fuels will stay high. Electricity prices are also up moderately. Higher heating costs will hit particularly hard in the Northeast, where many people use heating oil. — *New York Times*, August 5, 2008

Read more at:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/06/business/06fuel.html?em> <<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/06/business/06fuel.html?em>>

#### · **Unpaid Bills are Causing More Utility Shut-Offs**

Utility shut-offs for customers behind on their energy bills are increasing around the country, reaching 50 percent or more in some hard-hit areas, as the effects of rising prices and a sagging economy are beginning to drag down more vulnerable consumers. Agencies that provide financial assistance for energy costs report long waiting lists and significant jumps in first-time applicants. With the prospect of much more serious trouble this winter, when bills traditionally are higher, Congress is exploring a significant increase in federal energy assistance as part of a second economic stimulus plan scheduled for consideration next month. — *Los Angeles Times*, August 7, 2008

Read more at:

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-energy7-2008aug07,0,1432772.story> <<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-energy7-2008aug07,0,1432772.story>>

#### · **Maine Group Fears ‘Death by Hypothermia’**

The two words Maine Community Action Association President Matthew Smith hears most when he asks those at the forefront of helping Maine families get heating fuel assistance are “fear” and “desperation.” “People are fearful and they are desperate,” Smith said in a telephone interview Thursday, hours after a news conference during which he released a series of federal and state recommendations aimed at helping families make it through this winter — and the many more to come. With the cost of heating fuel up from \$1.06 a gallon during the 2002-03 heating season to a projected \$5.04, an increase of about 375 percent, it is clear to Smith and the 10 regional community action programs that make up the statewide association that something has to be done, and now. — *Bangor (ME) Daily News*, August 8, 2008

Read more at:

<http://bangornews.com/news/t/news.aspx?articleid=168131&zoneid=500> <<http://bangornews.com/news/t/news.aspx?articleid=168131&zoneid=500>>

#### · **Utility Customers Sweating High Bills**

Last month, Metairie resident Sherry Lloyd’s electricity bill from Entergy Louisiana LLC was \$408.27 despite her efforts to conserve power at her 1,100-square-foot home. “I just don’t get it,” said Lloyd, 65, who lives on a fixed income with her adult autistic son, Timmy. “If it goes up any higher, I don’t know how I can afford it.” But Lloyd is likely to face the unthinkable this month. At the time people are likely to be consuming the most power to cool their homes in the August heat, ratepayers throughout the New Orleans area will get slammed by record or near-record fuel adjustment charges because of a June spike in natural gas prices. — *New Orleans (LA) Times-Picayune*, August 10, 2008

Read more at:

<http://www.nola.com/timespic/stories/index.ssf?/base//library-153/121834702916590.xml&coll=1>  
<<http://www.nola.com/timespic/stories/index.ssf?/base//library-153/121834702916590.xml&coll=1>>

· **Northeast to be Home Heating Oil Hell?**

Despite recent drop in crude oil, the cost of home heating oil averages \$3.13 a gallon. The steep price tag is putting unprecedented pressure on consumers and the companies that deliver oil in the Northeast. For 85-year-old Constance Copes, the cold hard truth of heating oil prices has suddenly hit home. She'll pay 60 percent more per gallon than last year. Oil dealer Jim Meehan is also feeling pain at the pump. Last week, he paid about \$12,000 to fill his tanker; and come winter he'll do it three times a day. "Everybody's concerned about the price of oil and ways to afford it. It's just mind-boggling, because last year our typical price was \$2.50 a gallon, and now it's almost doubled," Meehan says. That's grim news in New England, where eight million families (50 percent of the households) heat their homes with oil, which is now averaging \$4 a gallon at retail. — *CBS News*, August 11, 2008

Read more at:

[http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/08/11/cbsnews\\_investigates/main4339423.shtml?source=mostpop\\_story](http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/08/11/cbsnews_investigates/main4339423.shtml?source=mostpop_story)  
<[http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/08/11/cbsnews\\_investigates/main4339423.shtml?source=mostpop\\_story](http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/08/11/cbsnews_investigates/main4339423.shtml?source=mostpop_story)>

· **Nebraska Plan to Help With Heating Bills Criticized**

Melissa Ortiz works 40 hours a week and still has to rely on free food from non-profits to support her four children and get by month-to-month. But the real financial dread will settle in this winter, along with the cold weather. She'll probably do what she did last year after being turned down by the state for assistance paying her winter heating bill because she earned slightly too much money: Bundle up the kids at night, pay just enough each month to keep the heat from being turned off, and rely on the kindness of churches. If Ortiz lived in any number of other states, her income would likely be low enough to qualify her for the federal program administered by states that provides poor people with millions of dollars to help pay their heating bills. Only four other states have income requirements that are more restrictive than Nebraska, according to the Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest. The group is asking state officials to ease the income restrictions so they are in line with other states. — *Associated Press*, August 13, 2008

Read more at:

<http://www.forbes.com/feeds/ap/2008/08/13/ap5318782.html> <<http://www.forbes.com/feeds/ap/2008/08/13/ap5318782.html>>

· **Downeast Donates \$100,000**

Downeast Energy & Building Supply, a 100-year-old family-owned business, recently announced they are increasing its annual donation to heat assistance programs in Maine and southern New Hampshire from \$50,000 last year to \$100,000 this year due to the increase in need. "As a company, we have always believed that it is our responsibility to be good neighbors and to help our neighbors in need," said John Peters, president of Downeast Energy & Building Supply. "This year, as we all know, is going to be especially difficult. The need for heating assistance will likely be even greater than it was last year and we felt the need to increase our donation to these organizations." —

Portsmouth (NH) Herald, August 14, 2008

Read more at:

<http://www.seacoastonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080814/BIZ/808140345&sfad=1> <<http://www.seacoastonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080814/BIZ/808140345&sfad=1>>

· **As Home-heating Costs Rise, People Turn to Firewood**

Gale Patti's eyes nearly popped out of his head a couple of weeks ago when he opened his bill for home heating oil. "I got a letter that I owed \$340," said Patti, of New Sewickley Township. Patti called the company to explain he had already paid his bill and was even more surprised to learn that it was his new budget plan. The monthly payment for the next 12 months had jumped a long way from the \$65 a month Patti was charged when he first moved into his house. The cost pushed Patti to install an electric heat pump. — *Beaver (PA) Beaver County Times*, August 18, 2008

Read more at:

<http://www.timesonline.com/articles/2008/08/17/news/doc48a8f428ecf62815012279.txt> <<http://www.timesonline.com/articles/2008/08/17/news/doc48a8f428ecf62815012279.txt>>

· **Sky-high Electric Bills Spark Pleas for Help**

Faced with a \$355.89 electric bill she can't afford, 73-year-old Antoinette Wenzel of Kenner called Entergy Louisiana LLC last week to register for help in the state's newly declared energy emergency. The company referred her to a community action center that told her she could get extra time to pay portions of her utility bills because of the emergency, but the group said there wasn't any grant money to help her. "As soon as they picked up the phone, they said, 'We don't have any funding,'" Wenzel said. "They have a waiting list. They said to come back in September." What Wenzel and many other people around the New Orleans area are discovering as they seek assistance with their electric bills is that the federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program has run out of money in many parishes. — *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, August 20, 2008

Read more at:

<http://www.nola.com/news/t-p/metro/index.ssf?/base//news-30/1219210274159020.xml&coll=1> <<http://www.nola.com/news/t-p/metro/index.ssf?/base//news-30/1219210274159020.xml&coll=1>>

· **The Big Chill**

Like many Vermonters, Randy Babcock is very worried about how he will pay for heating fuel this winter. But Babcock, a former truck driver who now is on disability, and his wife have another worry to deal with first: How to pay for the propane they used to heat their home last winter. "I have got to do something," Babcock said. "Low income, or fixed-income, people, I don't know what we are going to do." Like nearly every other heating fuel, the cost of propane has gone up as oil prices have increased, meaning the price the Babcocks must pay to heat the 1973 trailer they call home in Poultney, which belonged to his father, has gone up radically. The cost of propane has increased by 36 percent over the last year, a big jump but less than the hike in fuel oil. The cost of No. 2 oil – the common heating fuel – has increased on average by 82 percent in Vermont. — *Barre & Montpelier (VT) Times Argus*, August 20, 2008

Read more at:

<http://www.timesargus.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080820/NEWS01/808200354/1002/NEWS01> <<http://www.timesargus.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080820/NEWS01/808200354/1002/NEWS01>>

· **More People Seek Help to Pay Rising Utility Bills**

Boston Avenue Helping Hand Ministry is usually open until noon Monday through Friday, but by 10:45 a.m. Thursday, a familiar sign went up in up in the window: “Out of funds.” “It has become this way over the last couple of months or so, but it’s happening to many nonprofits,” said volunteer Bunty Seibert. Turning away more people than they are able to serve is common among those helping defray rising utility costs in the Tulsa area. With more pressure on households with rising bills, waiting until cutoff notices and bills come due puts a crunch on more than the people that owe the utility companies money, Seibert said. — *Tulsa (OK) World*, August 21-23, 2008

Read more at:

[http://www.tulsaworld.com/news/article.aspx?articleID=20080823\\_11\\_A1\\_Boston127839](http://www.tulsaworld.com/news/article.aspx?articleID=20080823_11_A1_Boston127839) <[http://www.tulsaworld.com/news/article.aspx?articleID=20080823\\_11\\_A1\\_Boston127839](http://www.tulsaworld.com/news/article.aspx?articleID=20080823_11_A1_Boston127839)>

**Editorials ...**

· **High Heat, Utility Costs Endangering State’s Poor**

A bill to help low-income Arizonans and others survive extreme heat has stalled in the U.S. Senate — a troubling development as energy costs soar. The legislation would add \$2.5 billion to the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, nearly doubling LIHEAP funds. That’s critical for Arizona, where more than 400 people died over the past decade because of extreme heat. But even Arizona Sen. Jon Kyl joined fellow Republicans to block the bill after Democratic leader Harry Reid refused to allow a vote on offshore oil drilling legislation. (Arizona Sen. John McCain, who was at his cabin near Sedona, missed the LIHEAP vote.) We agree that Congress needs to address the controversial issue of offshore drilling. But we regret that the battle over oil drilling has come between low-income Arizonans and the opportunity to provide them with federal help on utility costs. — *Tucson (AZ) Daily Citizen*, August 2, 2008

Read more at:

[http://www.tucsoncitizen.com/ss/our\\_opinion/92590.php](http://www.tucsoncitizen.com/ss/our_opinion/92590.php) <[http://www.tucsoncitizen.com/ss/our\\_opinion/92590.php](http://www.tucsoncitizen.com/ss/our_opinion/92590.php)>

· **Congress’ Reply to Energy Crisis? Go on Vacation**

We can understand why some people are cynical about government. At a time of record high oil prices, when unemployment is going up along with the cost of food, the Bush administration proposed cutting funds for the program that helps low-income families weatherize their homes. And Congress, locked in election-year political battles, did little to stop the administration. Instead, lawmakers left town without giving the program the money it needs. Which means they’ve left needy Americans out in the cold. Congress gave the program \$241 million last year. This year, the Department of Energy asked only for \$201 million -- despite the fact that the program has been proven to help low-income families lower their heating bills by 32 percent and there are many more needy families this year than last. — *Augusta (ME) Morning Sentinel*, August 5, 2008

Read more at:

<http://morningsentinel.mainetoday.com/view/columns/5289302.html> <<http://morningsentinel.mainetoday.com/view/columns/5289302.html>>

· **Home-Heating Disaster Looms**

The near doubling of heating oil prices since last year could create a public health disaster if federal, state, and local officials do not act now to protect the most vulnerable. The country had a few days to prepare for Hurricane Katrina, and failed. It has more than three months to prepare for this frozen Katrina, and there will be no excuse this time. While natural gas rates have also increased since last year, the most dramatic hike has been in the cost of heating oil, which is up 81 percent. Of the country's 8 million households that heat with oil, 1 million are in Massachusetts. In recent years, about 45,000 of them have qualified for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, which is limited to families of four earning less than \$41,300. With the spike in heating costs this year, many families earning above that level are going to have trouble keeping oil in their tanks. — *Boston Globe*, August 9, 2008

Read more at:

[http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial\\_opinion/editorials/articles/2008/08/09/home\\_heating\\_disaster\\_looms/](http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/editorials/articles/2008/08/09/home_heating_disaster_looms/) <[http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial\\_opinion/editorials/articles/2008/08/09/home\\_heating\\_disaster\\_looms/](http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/editorials/articles/2008/08/09/home_heating_disaster_looms/)>

· **State Should Halt Power Cut-offs**

Elbert Dossey now knows what some desperate Texans are experiencing this summer when the electric company pulls the plug. Dossey's plight was reported here last week. He's moving to Clifton from Robinson. He thought he and electric provider First Choice were on the same page as to when to turn off the juice. Instead, it cut it off five days early — five days with temperatures over 100 degrees. His misery is over. But for many, it's just begun. Because of sky-high electric bills they can't pay, many poor and elderly Texans are facing disconnection. The situation may not be as serious as previous years because major utilities are participating in a voluntary moratorium on electric cutoffs. But that doesn't include all of the electric providers. The Public Utility Commission four times in the last nine years has issued statewide cut-off moratoriums through the hottest months. AARP Texas and other consumer groups are urging it now. PUC should comply. — *Waco (TX) Tribune-Herald*, August 17, 2008

Read more at:

<http://www.wacotrib.com/opin/content/news/opinion/stories/2008/08/17/08172008waceditorial.html> <<http://www.wacotrib.com/opin/content/news/opinion/stories/2008/08/17/08172008waceditorial.html>>

· **Government Must Help Heating Crisis**

Oil prices appear to have stabilized, at least for the moment, and the price of a gallon of gasoline has slowly declined in recent weeks. But how that will impact home heating oil prices this winter remains unclear. What is clear, however, is the need for assistance is growing. ... The state seems well prepared in positioning itself to address that issue. The federal government must now do its part. — *Norwich (CT) Bulletin*, August 18, 2008

Read more at:

<http://www.norwichbulletin.com/opinions/x1485139909/Our-View-Government-must-help-heating-crisis> <<http://www.norwichbulletin.com/opinions/x1485139909/Our-View-Government-must-help-heating-crisis>>

heating-crisis>

· **Prepare Now for Cold Days Ahead**

Hot as August can be, no one has figured out how to store the heat for the cold months ahead -- and the rising costs we can anticipate for keeping warm. That puts a premium on preparing now in other ways: insulating, caulking and doing other routine heat-saving jobs around the house, which anyone with a utility bill would be wise to do. But just as important, Congress must put more backstops for poor working families in place well ahead of the first frost. The U.S. Senate made a start earlier this month with a bill to add \$2.5 billion to the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program -- and then backed off, because President George W. Bush threatened a veto. That amount of money would nearly double what the program has distributed annually in recent years, and it still would not cover the true needs that rack the country. — *Detroit Free Press*, August 25, 2008

Read more at:

<http://www.freep.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080825/OPINION01/808250314/1069> <<http://www.freep.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080825/OPINION01/808250314/1069>>

**Commentaries ...**

· **Heat vs. Eat is Untenable Choice**

While high gas prices have become a major issue, another fuel cost hit to family budgets is around the corner: skyrocketing bills for home energy. According to the federal Energy Information Administration, prices for gas and home heating oil are nearing \$5 a gallon in some places, up nearly 70 percent in the last year. Utility bills already have risen 30 percent in the past five years on average nationally, and utilities are raising rates further in many parts of the country in response to higher fuel costs. Puget Sound Energy has made a regulatory filing to charge higher rates for electricity and natural gas. In this region, as everywhere, higher home energy costs will hit the poorest families hardest. They now spend six times more of their income on utilities than middle- and upper-income families and often face desperate choices to “heat or eat.” — *Stockton Williams in Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, August 4, 2008

Read more at:

[http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/opinion/373495\\_energy05.html](http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/opinion/373495_energy05.html) <[http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/opinion/373495\\_energy05.html](http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/opinion/373495_energy05.html)>

· **Drive Naked, Save America**

Call our politicians and tell them to stay on vacation. Call the caribou roaming in Alaska and tell them they're safe. Call the Saudi king and tell him what you really think of his oil. I, Glenn Beck, a recovering alcoholic rodeo clown, have come up with a solution to America's energy crisis...and you're wearing it. Look at yourself right now. You've probably got on a shirt, socks, shoes, jewelry, maybe even some pants. Do you have any idea how much all of that weighs? If people really loved America, they would strip down, leave their clothes at home, and drive around buck naked. That would decrease the weight of our cars, which would increase our gas mileage so dramatically that we probably wouldn't have to drill for any new oil! Genius, right? Of course, my idea has about as much of a chance to make a real difference in our energy crisis as the suggestion that Barack Obama recently made. — Glenn Beck on *CNN.com*, August 8, 2008

Read more at:

<http://www.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/08/07/beck.energy/index.html> <<http://www.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/08/07/beck.energy/index.html>>

· **Tales of Hardship Will Only Grow Worse**

This year, Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders e-mailed constituents and asked them to tell him what was going on in their lives economically. He was shocked by how many people responded -- more than 700 in the first week. A single mother described a winter of living without heat. Someone gave her a wood stove, but she ran out of wood in February. She burned dining room furniture so that she and her 9-year-old son could stay warm. She had draped a blanket from the kitchen doorway, piled pillows on the floor and slept on the pile near the stove. An oncology social worker reported that his cancer patients could not afford to travel to an outpatient clinic for radiation and chemotherapy treatment due to gas prices. Without financial help from the clinic, the cancer patients could not go for treatment. ... The common thread in all these situations is a person who is earning stagnant or declining income while dealing with exploding expenses. The expense could be gasoline, home heating oil, a sub-prime loan, medications or food. Or it could be the cumulative effect of more than one of these items. — Jonathan P. Baird in the *Concord (NH) Monitor*, August 10, 2008

Read more at:

<http://www.cmonitor.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080810/OPINION/808100307/1028/OPINION02> <<http://www.cmonitor.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080810/OPINION/808100307/1028/OPINION02>>

· **Great Texas Energy Assistance Fund Heist**

You might say that Connie Bauer needed the money a lot more than Texas budget writers did, especially after she got the \$400-plus electric bill. The Grand Prairie mother has three autistic children. The family relies on Supplemental Security Income. Fortunately, a thoughtful someone at the phone company told her help might be available with her electric bill. The good news is that it was. The bad news is that for others like her, it isn't. is receiving roughly a 20 percent discount on subsequent bills and a break retroactive to the whopper that send her head spinning. She got the break through the System Benefit Fund (SBF), which this year Texas lawmakers have graciously allowed to do what it was meant to do — at least for some who desperately need it. — John Young in the *Waco (TX) Tribune-Herald*, August 31, 2008

Read more at:

<http://www.wacotrib.com/opin/content/news/opinion/stories/2008/08/31/08312008wacyoung.html> <<http://www.wacotrib.com/opin/content/news/opinion/stories/2008/08/31/08312008wacyoung.html>>

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