

---

*National Fuel Funds Network*

1010 Vermont Ave., NW, #718, Washington, DC 20005

202 824-0638 (fax), 202 824-0660 (phone)

<mailto:info@nationalfuelfunds.org><http://www.nationalfuelfunds.org>

October 1, 2009

**Energy Safety Net Bulletin #143**

Dear member: As we move into the first days of autumn, reports from around the country indicated that the need for energy assistance may be greater this heating season than last year. From Maine to Montana, assistance programs are expecting to see more people in need of help with their energy bills.

In Maine, the Kennebec Valley Community Action Program reported receiving 4,000 applications for aid in September, before the program opened. Callers seeking appointments now aren't likely to get an appointment until January. Kelly LaChance, LIHEAP manager for KVCAP, said "It looks like we're going to have a huge influx this year. It's the economy. People are unemployed, or if they have a job, their wages have been frozen. The cost of things is going up, but paychecks are not." Last year, KVCAP processed 11,800 applications, about 2,000 more than ever. This year LaChance said she expects between 12,000 and 13,000 before the end of the heating season.

At the West Virginia Utility Assistance Program, program director Danielle Snidow said she expects an increase in people seeking assistance. She said her program, which is part of the Dollar Energy Fund, is funded through donations from the state's utilities, the Salvation Army, and customer contributions, has \$1.5 million available for those in need. Sara Keys, social service director for the Salvation Army which processes applications for the program, said "I'm booked every single day, Monday through Friday."

In Hannibal, MO, Dave Dexheimer of Douglass Community Services said he gets 15 to 20 calls for assistance a day. "It's going to be tough," he said. "We get much more than any agency can handle." Janice Robinson of the North East Community Action Corporation said "You're seeing that middle-income group that's hitting the poverty guideline. It's going to be very, very hectic."

Sylvia Sangrey at Opportunities Inc. in Helena, MT said she expects a greater influx of people looking for help with their heating bills. She said her program has begun filing assistance requests for seniors and will start with general applications this week. She said the LIHEAP program has broadened its eligibility requirements to allow households making up to 200 percent of the poverty level to qualify.

## Register Now for LIHEAP Action DAY

Registration is open for the **NFFN's LIHEAP Action Day**. The national grassroots day of lobbying on behalf of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program is **February 10, 2010**. Please join us and other LIHEAP supporters as we take to Capitol Hill to voice our support for this vital program.

Click the button below to register



Come to Washington for **LIHEAP Action Day** and make your voice heard.

Please let us know what's going on in your area. Phone, fax or email us with updates on your program. The information you provide us will help as we prepare for Action Day.

### LIHEAP

- The Congress last night passed and sent to the President a continuing resolution that will keep the federal government operating until the end of October. The stopgap legislation was necessary because the Congress had not completed work on most of the appropriations bills which provide funding for the government for fiscal year 2010 which begins today. The bill continues funding for government programs at the FY 2009 levels so funding for LIHEAP will be set at \$5.1 billion. It is not clear at this time how much of the LIHEAP funding will be immediately available to the states. NFFN will continue to follow this issue and will provide you with more details as they become available.

### Fuel Fund Actions

- Energy Outreach Colorado, the Fuel Fund of Maryland, The Heat and Warmth Fund (THAW) and Operation Fuel have each received four star ratings from an independent charity evaluator. Charity Navigator annually ranks the financial health of more than 5,000 charities in the country.
- The Massachusetts Good Neighbor Energy Fund, a cooperative effort by the state's utilities, their customers and the Salvation Army, announced that it had topped its fund raising target of \$650,000 for the "Give the Gift of Warmth" campaign by raising \$884,199. The fund helps families in temporary financial crisis pay their energy bills.

### Utility Actions

- South Jersey Gas has donated an additional \$100,000 to New Jersey SHARES to provide energy assistance to New Jersey households in need. "Many New Jersey residents are walking a financial tightrope each month as they try to maintain their household in the face of rising costs and shrinking income," said Jeff DeBois, chief operating officer of the Folsom, NJ based utility.

### State Government Actions

- The state of Tennessee has unveiled an internet based screening tool designed to help

people find and apply for more than a dozen social service programs including LIHEAP. Called "FundHelpTN," the tool allows people to determine their eligibility for Medicaid, TANF, CoverKids, Families First, and several other state and federal programs. Brian Haile, deputy director of the state's Benefits Administration, said, "We wanted to create a one-stop-shop or TurboTax for public benefits. He said economic conditions in the state have created more first-time benefit seekers and "we wanted people to tell us their circumstances, as briefly as possible, and based on their feedback, get them pointed in the right direction."

### **Climate Change Legislation**

On September 30, Sens. Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and John Kerry (D-MA) released draft climate change legislation designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, promote the transition to clean energy, and reduce dependence on foreign oil. The bill would place a cap on greenhouse emissions and allow for the sale and trade of pollution allowances. The legislation calls for an overall limit on emissions and requires companies that emit those gases to purchase allowances for each ton of carbon they emit. The discussion draft of the legislation released yesterday lists a series of programs that would receive allocations from the sale of allowances to compensate for increased energy prices, including energy assistance for low income customers. It does not yet specify the specific allocations for the energy assistance and other programs. The Committee will address this matter in hearings and the legislation's mark-up.

Hearings on this bill are scheduled to begin October 19 before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, which Sen. Boxer chairs. NFFN will monitor this legislation and will keep you informed. The bill's text, summary and other material are on the website of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee at [http://epw.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?](http://epw.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Majority.PressReleases&ContentRecord_id=0c00344c-802a-23ad-4f4d-edb0c9408d2e)

[http://epw.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Majority.PressReleases&ContentRecord\\_id=0c00344c-802a-23ad-4f4d-edb0c9408d2e](http://epw.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Majority.PressReleases&ContentRecord_id=0c00344c-802a-23ad-4f4d-edb0c9408d2e) .

### **Reports and Studies**

The overall poverty rate in the U.S. rose to 13.2 percent in 2008 and the median household income declined by 3.6 percent, according to figures released by the U.S. Census Bureau. The Census Bureau reported an increase in poverty in 31 states and the District of Columbia, with Connecticut experiencing the largest increase. In that state, the poverty rate increased by 1.4 percent to 9.3 percent.

The complete report the "American Community Survey" can be found on the Bureau's website – <http://www.census.gov> .

George Coling, Executive Director  
National Fuel Funds Network  
1010 Vermont Ave., NW Suite 718  
Washington, DC 20005  
202-824-0660  
[www.nationalfuelfunds.org](http://www.nationalfuelfunds.org)