

In the Energy Assistance Community ...

• **TXU Energy Provides Lead Sponsorship for National Conference**

TXU Energy has opened the sponsorship drive for the 2010 National Energy and Utility Conference with a \$15,000 contribution to the National Fuel Funds Network and National Low Income Energy Consortium. With the donation, which includes both a cash contribution and providing conference registration bags, the Texas-based utility has become a Supporting Conference Sponsor for the event next June. TXU Energy is an associate member of NLIEC; its manager of customer advocacy, Kim Campbell, is a member of the NFFN Board of Directors and one of the national co-chairs for NEUAC 2010.

Austin Energy has also become a contributor for NEUAC 2010. The municipal utility serving Texas' capital city, will be a \$5,000 sponsor of the conference, which will take place on June 14-16 at the Hyatt Regency San Antonio on the Riverwalk in San Antonio, Texas.

• **THAW Fund Replaces CEO**

The board of directors of The Heat and Warmth (THAW) Fund in Detroit has dismissed its chief executive officer, John X. Miller. The action came at the board's meeting on November 13. THAW declined to disclose the circumstances of the dismissal of Miller, who had been with the organization less than two years. The board named chief financial officer Deborah Diviny, who has been with the organization for five years, as interim CEO of the nonprofit and said it plans to immediately launch a search for a permanent CEO. THAW provides low-income residents with emergency energy assistance and advocates for long-term solutions to energy issues. — *Crain's Detroit Business* and *WJBK-TV*, November 17, 2009

Read more at: <<http://www.crainsdetroit.com/article/20091117/FREE/911179993>>
<<http://www.myfoxdetroit.com/dpp/news/thaw-leadership-091117>>

In Washington ...

• **EIA Predicts Further Decline in Heating Costs**

The U.S. Energy Information Administration is predicting a further decline in home energy expenditures over the winter months, with overall spending for heating fuels dropping by as much as 6 percent from last year's average. In its Short-Term Energy Outlook released on November 10, the EIA said expenditures could decline to an average of \$977 for the season, down from \$1,038 last year. As usual, forecast prices vary by fuel type. The EIA said spending for heating oil may run 4.1 percent more during the period, rising from \$1,864 to \$1,940. It forecast a 10.9 percent decline in spending on natural gas, from \$889 to \$792,

while propane expenditures could be 10.6 percent lower, falling from \$1,950 in the winter of 2008-2009 to \$1,743 for 2009-2010. It said electricity expenditures would hold fairly steady, falling 0.07 percent from \$953 to \$946. — *U.S. Energy Information Administration*, November 10, 2009

Read more at: <<http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/steo/pub/wf-table.pdf>>

- **Continuing Resolution That Funds LIHEAP Set to Expire on December 18**

The Continuing Resolution that provides funding for LIHEAP and many other government programs is scheduled to expire on December 18. All indications are, however, that Congress will extend the Continuing Resolution to fund the program until Congress can either pass the pending appropriations bills or combine all of the funding legislation into a single omnibus spending bill. The current resolution contains \$5.1 billion for LIHEAP, \$4.5 billion of which is base funding and \$593 million is emergency contingency funds.

In the States ...

- **Heating Assistance Program Reinstated for Hoosiers**

Thousands of low-income Hoosiers will continue to see reductions in their winter heating bills that could range from 15 up to 32 percent, after the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission this week reinstated its low-income assistance program. “The Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor [OUCC] strongly supported the reinstatement of the Universal Service and Winter Warmth programs, and we are very pleased with the Commission’s decision this afternoon,” said OUCC Counselor David Stippler, in a press release this week. The extension of the program through Oct. 2012 will help mitigate the cost of heating bills for more than 56,000 Indiana residents, totaling about \$5 million annually. *Jeffersonville (IN) News & Tribune*, November 21, 2009

Read more at: <http://www.newsandtribune.com/clarkcounty/local_story_325170648.html?keyword=topstory>

In the News ...

- **Heating Aid May Be Less Available**

Winter’s chill is often the start of great things for skiers and outdoor enthusiasts, inspiring for artists and a bit annoying for those who feel New Mexico should never get cold. But for some residents, this winter is the start of a lot of anxiety over heating bills. There is some help available through government programs and charitable organizations, though not as much as there has been in previous years. — *Moriarty (NM) Mountain View Telegraph*, November 5, 2009

Read more at: <<http://www.emtelegraph.com/index.php/news/2144-Heating-Aid-May-Be-Less-Available.html>>

- **Offer for Power Bill Aid Brings Early Lineups, Fights**

Hundreds of people lined up at the Community Service Programs of West Alabama office Monday morning to apply for help paying their power bills. CSP receives money through the federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program twice a year, and demand for the aid is growing. “We are starting to see more people who have been laid off from factories and other jobs,” said Sontonia Stephens, director of supportive services for CSP. That need was

evident Monday, when Stephens received a call from TPD at 3:30 a.m. to let her know people were already lined up at the CSP office on 17th Street near Central High School. But she said long lines are not unusual. Some people seeking assistance apply every time; others use the program temporarily to offset lean times, she said. — *Tuscaloosa (AL) News*, November 17, 2009

Read more at: <<http://www.tuscaloosaneews.com/article/20091117/NEWS/911169884/1007/NEWS02?Title=Offer-for-power-bill-aid-brings-early-lineups-fights>>

Operation Fuel Won't Take Applications Until 2010

Operation Fuel won't be able to take applications for energy assistance this winter until at least Jan. 4, 2010, Executive Director Patricia Wrice told fuel bank directors and utility company representatives Tuesday. Wrice spoke at Operations Fuel's statewide meeting at the Elizabeth Park Pond House in West Hartford. Normally, Operation Fuel kicks off its emergency energy program on Dec. 1, but the organization is still awaiting final approval from the Office of Policy Management for \$4.75 million in state money. Funds were allocated earlier this year by the Connecticut legislature. Wrice said people applying for energy assistance will be able to submit bills incurred after Nov. 1. — *Bristol (CT) Press*, November 17, 2009

Read more at: <<http://www.bristolpress.com/articles/2009/11/17/news/doc4b0368e343328625267779.txt>>

Michigan City Adopts New Shutoff Rules

Bay City, Michigan, has adopted new utility shutoff rules intended to ensure elderly, low-income, and critical care customers are protected. The city received national attention this past January when an elderly resident froze to death after his electricity service, which was on a service limiter, was shut off by Bay City Electric. The new rules prohibit the use of service limiters at least until the Michigan Public Service Commission establishes uniform standards for their use. Bay City Electric had placed a service limiter, which reduced electric power, on the home of the elderly resident because he hadn't paid his bill. The rules say electricity cannot be shut off at the homes of known senior citizens (defined as age 65 or older) during the winter heating season, or on summer days when temperatures are forecast to be above 95 degrees. Additionally, low-income consumers who are behind on their bills must be given the option of payment plans and there are new requirements regarding customer notification before shut-offs and company outreach about energy assistance programs and protections. The Bay City rules closely follow the model rules proposed by the Shut-off Protection Workgroup of the Michigan Municipal Electric Association and are intended to meet or exceed proposed legislation currently under consideration by the Michigan House and Senate. — LIHEAP Clearinghouse, November 18, 2009

Read more at: <<http://www.liheap.ncat.org/news/nov09/mi.htm>>

Duke Consumers to be Asked to Pay for Smart Grid Without Assurance of Useful Benefits

Duke Energy Ohio has filed a settlement to cover the costs of the next phase of its plan to implement a smart grid. The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC) did not sign the settlement because the plan gives no assurances about when residential consumers benefit

from the smart grid and dynamic prices. Duke Energy also may elect to reject \$200 million in federal money it was awarded to implement a \$1 billion smart grid in Ohio, Indiana and Kentucky. The OCC believes it is essential for Duke to accept the federal grant money given its desire to roll out smart grid throughout its service territory. This will help defray the costs that consumers will have to pay. — *Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel news release*, November 19, 2009

Read more at: <<http://www.pickocc.org/news/2009/pressrelease.php?date=11192009>>

· **PPL to Pay \$471,000 After Fire Death**

PPL Electric Utilities cut power to Cynthia Glassman's home in August 2008 because the 64-year-old Lancaster resident — who was paying off delinquent bills through an agreement with the utility — missed a \$7.23 late fee, according to the state Public Utility Commission. A day later, Glassman died when her house went up in flames. The cause of the fire was never determined. But the Allentown utility will pay \$471,000 to settle PUC investigations into its actions regarding Glassman's shut-off and the termination of electric service to an apartment in Mechanicsburg, Cumberland County, that also was followed by a fire. The PUC approved the settlements Thursday. — *Allentown (PA) Call*, November 20, 2009

Read more at: <http://www.mcall.com/business/all-22_5ppl.q.7092927nov20,0,7826254.story>

· **Utility Shutoffs Soar for Poor PG&E Customers**

The number of low-income households cut off by Pacific Gas and Electric Co. after they fell behind on their utility bills jumped 75 percent this year, according to a state report released Thursday. For the 12 months that ended in August, 91,393 low-income households lost their utility service, compared with 52,202 in the previous 12-month period. Most soon paid to have service restored. The report, from a division of the California Public Utilities Commission, found that shutoffs increased throughout the state as the recession devastated home finances. But the increase has been most notable at San Francisco's PG&E. Statewide, the number of low-income homes that lost electric or gas service grew by 27.6 percent, the report found. The report examined data from California's big investor-owned utilities and does not include the public utilities in Sacramento and Los Angeles. — *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 20, 2009

Read more at: <<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2009/11/20/MNEL1ANIO7.DTL>>

· **Energy Assistance Shortage: Changes Mean No Financial Help for Thousands of Low-income Residents**

Michael Love sees signs of a freezing winter that have nothing to do with woolly worms. He's worried about LIHEAP, the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program. Reduced income-eligibility limits and other changes to the program this year promise to put a chill on the needy, predicts Love, president and CEO of the Energy Association of Pennsylvania, a trade group for utility companies. "There are 20,000 people who are going to get LIHEAP applications in the mail" this month Love said. "They are going to be denied." Love said he's perplexed by the changes, given that the federal funding earmarked for LIHEAP ... is the same as last year. — *Lancaster (PA) Sunday News*, November 22, 2009

Read more at: <<http://articles.lancasteronline.com/local/4/245384>>

· **Hard Times Add to Burden of Family Barely Getting By**

For years, Gary E. Cooper Jr. has worked a string of temporary jobs in factories and warehouses. Sometimes the jobs last quite a while. At other times, he finds himself without work for weeks at a stretch. But even when times are good, he brings home less than \$300 a week. More than a third of each paycheck goes toward rent on the family's three-bedroom apartment, in the shadow of the Thruway in West Seneca. The Coopers patch things together with the help of food stamps and the Home Energy Assistance Program. But even going downtown for appointments to get those services can be challenging. At more than \$2 each way, bus fare can make a hefty dent in such a tight budget. — *Buffalo (NY) News*, November 22, 2009

Read more at: <<http://www.buffalonews.com/cityregion/story/869941.html>>

· **Slow Sales Hit Firewood Dealers Hard**

It's not the weather that is causing some area firewood dealers to feel chilly — it's a slowdown in sales and an increase in competition that seem to bode badly for their businesses. Wood sales jumped last year after the price of No. 2 heating oil crested in July 2008 at \$4.71 per gallon, according to the Governor's Office of Energy Independence and Security. But this season, several local dealers are reporting that their sales are significantly off, and they attribute that only partially to the lower price for No. 2 heating oil. "I think there are a lot of reasons," said Dan Wagner of Bio-Logging in Belfast. "There's more people in it, because the economy is slow. And number two, people don't have the money to buy wood. They wait till the last minute. A lot of the lower-income families are worse off right now than they have been in a long time." — *Bangor (ME) Daily News*, November 23, 2009

Read more at: <<http://www.bangordailynews.com/detail/130695.html>>

· **Heating Costs Can't Go Low Enough for Some**

A recent announcement by Columbia Gas of Ohio that its prices for residential customers will be significantly lower this year was welcome news. City Law Director Mark Russell said an estimated cost for natural gas of \$92.43 to a typical residential customer, \$77.80 less than the figure for December 2008, translates to a drop in cost for members of the city's gas aggregation program. "That just means our program price will be even lower than last year if it's true, because we index our price against Columbia's gas price," Russell said. "We're happy to hear that Columbia is expecting their prices to remain low." About 3,500 city households in the aggregation program stand to save from the lower price. — *Marion (OH) Star*, November 24, 2009

Read more at: <<http://www.marionstar.com/article/20091124/NEWS01/911240304/-1/newsfront2/Heating-costs-can-t-go-low-enough-for-some>>

· **Mom Has Two Jobs, But Money's Tight**

Valaquenta Foster has been juggling two jobs for three years to support her 9-year-old son and pay a mortgage. A part-time certified nursing assistant, Foster supplements her income by working as a cleaner. Although she's sought full-time employment in her nursing job whenever an opportunity arises, the single mother said she's been unable to find full-time

child care. “For me it’s been either-or. My baby-sitter isn’t able to take care of my son five days a week, and I don’t have family in the area,” Foster said. She gets by “on a lot of prayer” and looking for any way to cut costs. “Thank God for LIHEAP (a low-income heating assistance program). It gives me a chance to save money,” she said. — *Sunbury (PA) Daily Item*, November 30, 3009

Read more at: <http://www.dailyitem.com/0100_news/local_story_332195933.html>

Commentaries ...

Gas Drillers Aren’t Paying Their Fair Share

It feels more like Halloween than Thanksgiving for many Pennsylvanians. Poverty is worse than first believed. ... Last year, the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program — LIHEAP — was praised for providing real help for Pennsylvanians struggling to stay warm. This year, income limits are harsher and grant amounts reduced as LIHEAP opens for the season. An individual making up to \$16,245 — and a family of four making up to \$33,075 — could qualify for LIHEAP. Last year’s income guidelines were \$23,110 for an individual and \$44,443 for a family of four. Shared pain was the dubious promise of the 101-day-late state budget. However, one industry came away pain-free — the gas drillers in Pennsylvania’s Marcellus Shale deposit. — Camille “Bud” George in the *Harrisburg (PA) Patriot-News*, November 12, 2009

Read more at: <http://www.pennlive.com/editorials/index.ssf/2009/11/gas_drillers_arent_paying_thei.html>

NLIEC News ©2009. *NLIEC News* is published monthly by the National Low Income Energy Consortium. It is provided free upon request to the Board of Directors and associate 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 *NLIEC News* may not be active at the time the newsletter is distributed. Some of the linked publications may require free or paid subscriptions in order to view linked items. To subscribe to the *NLIEC News*, send an e-mail request to dfox@nliec.org <<mailto:dfox@nliec.org>> . If you do not wish to receive the publication in the future, send a message to the same address with the word "unsubscribe" in the subject line.

National Low Income Energy Consortium
6324 Beryl Road, Alexandria, VA 22312
Phone 703-642-9070 Fax 703-916-7850

Chair — Cindy Datig, Dollar Energy Fund
Vice Chair — Linda Barnes, Entergy Corporation
Secretary — Chris Baker, AARP
Treasurer — Jim Jacob, New Jersey SHARES
Executive Director — David Fox