
NLIEC News

April 30, 2009

Within the Energy Assistance Community ...

· May 1 is Deadline for Early Bird Registration for NEUAC 2009

Although registration is open through May 15 for the National Energy and Utility Affordability Conference in Portland, Oregon, discounted “early bird” registration for NEUAC 2009 closes on May 1. Registrations must be postmarked by Friday to take advantage of the savings. Be sure to visit the conference web site (<http://www.neuac.org>) for the most up-to-the-minute conference information and to register.

Among the events at the three-day conference on June 15-17 are two plenary forums you won't want to miss! The first, “National Energy Policy: Local Impacts,” will examine how the sea change in American politics that occurred in 2008 promises to transform national energy policy.

Already the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act has provided a 20-fold increase in federal weatherization funds and seeded a smart grid of electricity transmission. The U.S. House of Representatives' energy bill would establish a cap-and-trade program for global warming gases, promote renewable energy and the smart grid, develop green jobs and increase energy efficiency. The ensuing transition in the energy economy will be profound, indeed.

The second plenary forum will examine the local benefits that are already developing from the creation of market-based efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the United States. Regional programs were established through which states could sell emission allowances through auctions and invest the proceeds in consumer benefits: energy efficiency, renewable energy and other clean energy technologies. It was believed that regional initiatives would spur innovation in the clean energy economy and create green jobs in each state. The early results are in, and it would appear that the initiatives are living up to their promise. In this plenary session, panelists from regional programs will report on the success of their efforts to date and look at potential benefits that may develop in the future.

· NEADA Releases Findings of National Energy Assistance Survey

The National Energy Assistance Directors' Association has released the results of its 2008 National Energy Assistance Survey, documenting changes in the affordability of energy bills, the need for LIHEAP and the choices that low-income households make when faced with unaffordable energy bills.

“The survey confirmed many of the families receiving LIHEAP assistance are struggling to pay their home energy bills and that without LIHEAP many more would be facing shut-off of

home energy service,” said NEADA, a member of the National Low Income Energy Consortium Board of Directors.

Among the findings, NEADA said record numbers of households reported sacrificing to pay their home energy bills and that households reported taking actions to reduce their energy bill that could be dangerous to their health or living situation. In addition, it found that high energy bills contributed to the high mortgage foreclosure rate.

Read more at: <<http://www.neada.org/communications/press/2009-04-28.pdf>>

- **Greenhouse Gas Initiative Provides \$2.8 Million to NJ SHARES**

The New Jersey Board of Public Utilities has designated \$2.8 million in funding for New Jersey SHARES to provide households in crisis with electric bill assistance. The funding, which should be available in early May to NJ SHARES clients, has been allocated through the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) for the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic region.

NJ SHARES will use the funding to help households in crisis who do not qualify for other assistance programs. RGGI is a 10-state consortium that is seeking to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from the power sector 10 percent by 2018.

Under the initiative, states sell emission allowances through auctions and invest the proceeds in energy efficiency, energy assistance and renewable energy. The \$2.8 million was made available to the Board of Public Utilities following RGGI's December auction. The auctions will continue on a quarterly basis. New Jersey SHARES is a member of the National Low Income Energy Consortium Board of Directors.

- **Dollar Energy Fund Staffer Honored as Pittsburgh CIO of the Year**

Sean Smiles, the director of information technology for the Dollar Energy Fund, has been honored as the 2009 Pittsburgh Chief Information Officer of the Year. Smiles was selected from a competitive group of his peers in the non-profit category. He was selected in part because of his accomplishments in creating Dollar Energy Fund's Software as a Service (SaaS) business line. During his five-year tenure at Dollar Energy Fund, he has created low-income utility program management systems that provide multiple benefits to the organization, its utility partners and clients. The Dollar Energy Fund is a member of the National Low Income Energy Consortium Board of Directors.

- **TXU Energy Launches Statewide Energy Efficiency Program**

TXU Energy is launching a new program designed to help low-income families use less electricity so they can lower their bills and save money. The Low Income Energy Efficiency Assistance Program is part of TXU Energy's overall commitment to invest \$100 million in energy efficiency and conservation programs through 2012. The initiative is endorsed by the company's Low Income Advisory Committee, which was established last year to help identify energy solutions for low-income customers. "The program will provide low-income customers with access to new technologies, like solar attic vents and power monitors, to help them reduce their energy use and save money," said Jim Burke, chief executive officer of TXU Energy. "In these tight economic times, we know that saving on the electric bill provides funds

for other important family needs.” TXU Energy is an associate member of the National Low Income Energy Consortium. — TXU Energy news release”

In Washington ...

- House/Senate Negotiators Agree to \$5.1 Billion for LIHEAP in FY 2010 Budget
House/Senate negotiators reached an agreement April 27 on the 2010 budget resolution that supports \$5.1 billion for LIHEAP — an increase of \$1.9 billion over the level recommended by President Obama. According to the conference report, lawmakers are intent on meeting “urgent needs of low-income families and elderly and disabled people.”

While the agreement supports the president’s request of \$3.2 billion for LIHEAP in 2010, the report said it “also includes a discretionary cap adjustment for an additional \$1.9 billion, for a total LIHEAP funding level of \$5.1 billion if the President’s funding level of \$3.2 billion is included in an appropriations measure.”

It said the money would help to continue providing heating and cooling assistance to over 5 million low-income households, including the working poor, disabled persons, elderly, and families with young children. In addition, the conference agreement would fund a proposed trigger adjustment at the discretion of the budget committees to make LIHEAP “more responsive to energy price increases.” The budget resolution is non-binding so House and Senate appropriators are free to determine the funding level for the program on their own. — National Energy Assistance Directors’ Association and National Fuel Funds Network

- Compromises Likely as Cap-and-Trade Proposal Moves Through House
U.S. House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Henry A. Waxman (D-CA) planned to mark up cap-and-trade legislation the week of May 11 when he and Rep. Edward J. Markey (D-MA), the chairman of the committee’s Energy and Environment Subcommittee, introduced their draft proposal on March 31.

By the time the committee completed 3½ days of hearings on their climate-change proposal April 24, however, it was obvious that changes would need to be made. Opposition from committee Republicans was no surprise. But some Democrats also expressed reservations about several provisions and their potential impacts. The hearings also revealed basic climate change strategy disagreements that could hamper Waxman’s plan to have a bill ready to send to the House floor by Memorial Day. — Oil & Gas Journal, April 28, 2009

Read more at: <http://www.ogj.com/display_article/360558/7/ONART/none/GenIn/1/Compromises-likely-as-cap-and-trade-proposal-moves-through-House/>

- Senate Coalition Seeking \$5.1 Billion Appropriation for LIHEAP
Members of the Northeast/Midwest Senate Coalition are circulating a letter among their colleagues asking the Senate Appropriations Committee to provide \$5.1 billion for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program in Fiscal Year 2010.

In the letter to Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA), the chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on

Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, members of the coalition noted that funding the program at \$5.1 billion in FY 2009 represented its highest level ever and enabled it to serve millions more families in desperate need of assistance.

“Even funded at \$5.1 billion, LIHEAP will not be able to reach every eligible family,” the letter says. It cites a December 2007 study by the Oak Ridge National Laboratory concluding that the need for energy assistance is clear. “The trend in recent years is for the cost of residential energy to low-income consumers to increase at a pace far exceeding the rate of general inflation or of increases in household income,” the ORNL study said. “This trend can be seen for all major fuel sources and all regions of the country. Many households will face higher energy burdens...and will lack the discretionary income to adjust to the rising costs of home energy.”

In the States ...

- **Alaska Officials Propose a State Department of Energy**

A four-hour roundtable discussion on Saturday with legislators and Alaska experts prompted a bill consolidating a host of state energy efforts under a new Department of Energy. The legislation, introduced Monday, would create a “one-stop shopping” center for Alaska energy needs, said Rep. Charisse Millett, R-Anchorage and co-chairwoman of the House Energy Committee with Rep. Bryce Edgmon, D-Dillingham.

While the details will be negotiated in the interim, the new department would serve as an umbrella over the Alaska Energy Authority and Alaska Natural Gas Development Authority, both now governed by boards, as well as weatherization and efficiency programs now under the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation. — Fairbanks (AK) Daily News-Miner, April 7, 2009

Read more at: <<http://newsminer.com/news/2009/apr/07/officials-propose-state-department-energy/>>

- **Maryland Utilities Back No-interest Payment Plans**

Utility company representatives said Tuesday that they support a proposal to offer no-interest payment plans to customers behind on their bills so long as the debts are repaid before heating bills start increasing again next winter.

"When you start pancaking a payment plan on top of a very cold winter period, that's when customers get far behind," Wayne Harbaugh, Baltimore Gas and Electric's vice president for regulatory affairs, told state regulators during a hearing.

The utilities want to recoup the costs of providing these plans, which Harbaugh described as "basically a no-interest loan" to customers. BGE and representatives from other companies urged the Maryland Public Service Commission to lift the temporary prohibition on suspending customers' utility services that was put in place last month to allow time to work out the details of the payment plans. — Baltimore Sun, April 8, 2009

Read more at: <<http://www.baltimoresun.com/business/bal-md.psc08apr08,0,6796137.story>>

- Nevada Assistance Program Evaluation Released

The 2008 evaluation of Nevada's state-funded energy assistance and weatherization program is available on the program's website. Titled State Fiscal Year 2008 Evaluation of the NRS 702 Energy Assistance Program & Weatherization Assistance Program <http://dwss.nv.gov/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=580&Itemid=287>, it is the sixth mandatory annual evaluation.

The program coordinates funds from a universal energy charge (UEC) that is assessed on most gas and electric utility customers with LIHEAP and other funds to create a statewide affordability and energy efficiency program. Program participants pay no more than the state median household energy burden (3.53 percent for 2008) for their energy bills, with the remainder covered by UEC funds and LIHEAP. Participants receive an annual, one-time per year benefit paid directly to their energy provider(s) and credited to their bill. They also receive assistance in paying past due bills. — LIHEAP Clearinghouse, April 24, 2009

Read more at: <<http://www.liheap.ncat.org/news/april09/nv.htm>>

In the News ...

- Weathering the Economic Storm

For contractor Ed Champigny of Lynn, it will mean more business, a new work vehicle and two more employees. For Anne Howe of Dorchester, it has meant saving \$250 a month on her home's natural-gas heating bill. The "it" is weatherization, the subsidized energy makeover for low- to moderate-income Bay Staters.

By sealing air leaks, adding insulation and installing more efficient appliances, the outcome can lead to a lifetime of savings through conservation.

Weatherization projects in Boston are expected to jump dramatically, with \$122 million coming into Massachusetts as part of the \$787 billion stimulus package signed into law by President Obama in February. The money from the stimulus will be spread over the next three years and represents a big bump from the \$6.5 million the state received last year. — Boston Herald, April 5, 2009

Read more at: <http://news.bostonherald.com/news/regional/view/2009_04_05_Weathering_the_economic_storm:_Stimulus_plan_energizes_businesses__homeowners/srvc=home&position=2>

- Citgo Giving Tribe Money

The St. Regis Mohawk Tribe was notified that it will again receive money to provide heating fuel assistance to its residents from Citgo, an oil company owned by the Venezuelan government. The tribe will receive approximately \$1 million, which works out to \$250 for each household to use to buy fuel and have it delivered. "This goes to show that being patient can be the best thing," Tribal Chief Barbara A. Lazore said in a statement. "The recent weather predictions of snow show that people still need to heat their homes." — Watertown (NY) Daily

Times, April 9, 2009

Read more at: <<http://www.watertowndailytimes.com/article/20090409/NEWS05/304099971/-1/NEWS>>

· Maryland to Redirect Cap-and-Trade Revenues

Maryland will take \$70 million it receives by charging utilities for carbon emissions to help low-income residents pay power bills, breaking with neighboring states that will use the revenue to lower energy use. The state's legislature is expected to approve a budget that will divert spending on energy-efficiency projects to rebates. The move proposed by Gov. Martin O'Malley will make it more costly to fight climate change with a "cap-and-trade" emissions market, said Brad Heavner, director for Environment Maryland, a nonprofit advocacy group. Maryland is one of 10 Northeastern states in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, or RGGI, the first U.S. market for carbon-dioxide emissions. — Bloomberg News, April 11, 2009

Read more at: <<http://www.delawareonline.com/article/20090411/BUSINESS/904110308/1003>>

· Candles To Blame In Fatal House Fire

Fire officials said a fire that killed a woman and a 7-year-old girl early Saturday in east Baltimore was started by candles. The fire happened shortly before 2 a.m. in the 1400 block of North Broadway Street. Investigators said the occupants of the home didn't have electricity. A third person attempting to escape the fire is being treated at Shock Trauma, officials said. Fire investigators said candles started the fire. ... No one at the address applied for energy assistance through the city. So far this year, 11 fire deaths have been reported in Baltimore, three of which have been in homes without electric. Two weeks ago, a woman died at a fire in her home that was caused by candles. Officials said she didn't have electric and no one at the home sought energy help. — WBAL-TV and Baltimore Sun, April 19-20, 2009

Read more at: <<http://www.wbaltv.com/news/19233387/detail.html>> <<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/local/bal-md.regiondigest190apr19,0,3582882.story>>

· First Person: Dyer Survived the Long, Cold Winter

"I'm still here," Marilyn Dyer said Monday, smiling, eight months after telling a reporter, "In a roundabout way, I'm kinda licked." Back then, on a clear, sun-filled August day, Dyer was dreading the coming winter. She was afraid she would either starve or freeze to death if she was forced to choose between paying \$4 a gallon for oil for her furnace or food prices that had gone through the roof. ... But have no fear. Dyer, 62, who called herself a survivor back in August, did pretty well during a winter that was long and cold, with plenty of snow and ice and financial troubles, too. — Belfast (ME) Republican Journal, April 23, 2009

Read more at: <<http://waldo.villagesoup.com/Community/story.cfm?storyID=155385>>

· MCC Opposes Bill Requiring Fee for Heating Assistance

The Missouri Catholic Conference is opposing a bill that would require low-income residents

to pay a fee in order to receive winter heating assistance. Senate Bill 299, sponsored by State Sen. John Griesheimer, R-Washington, includes provisions that would require a fee of \$100 or 25 percent of the assistance provided, whichever is more. "Such fees will turn away poor individuals, including those with children, the elderly and disabled, who desperately need energy assistance with utility bills," a statement from the Missouri Catholic Conference noted. "This is akin to refusing to throw someone a life preserver until they pay a fee." — St. Louis (MO) Review, April 23, 2009

· Michigan Man's Icy Death Called Not a Crime

No criminal charges will be filed in the death of a 93-year-old man who froze inside his home after an electric utility installed a power-limiting device because of unpaid bills, a prosecutor said Thursday. Bay County Prosecutor Kurt Asbury, citing the results of a Michigan State Police investigation and a final autopsy report, called Marvin Schur's death a "terrible tragedy" but not a crime. Neighbors discovered Schur's body Jan. 17 in his house in Bay City, about 90 miles northwest of Detroit. The windows were frosted over, icicles hung from a faucet, and Schur lay dead on the bedroom floor, wearing a winter jacket over four layers of clothing. An autopsy showed that Schur, a World War II veteran who lived alone, died of hypothermia, with heart disease as a contributing factor. Alzheimer's disease also was noted in the findings. — Associated Press, April 24, 2009

Read more at: <<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-frozen24-2009apr24,0,5635106.story>>

· Late Payments Threaten Bottom Line at Utilities

Faced with a deepening recession and rising utility rates, a growing number of Americans can't pay their energy bills, leading experts to project economic troubles for utility companies. Although countrywide numbers for the current heating season haven't yet been released, a number of national organizations, utilities and state agencies have seen even more delinquent payments this year than last — when one-fifth of utility customers had late payments, according to a study by the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners, a nonprofit that represents state public service commissions. — Washington Times, April 27, 2009

Read more at: <<http://washingtontimes.com/news/2009/apr/27/late-payments-threaten-bottom-line-at-utilities/>>

· As More Adults Struggle in Hard Times, Kids Feeling Impact

Susie Gaffney thought her mothering days were over years ago, but the bright, loving faces of Journei and Ralpheal let her know there's more to do. Dental, daycare and doctor's visits are part of the 59-year-old's yearly routine as she raises her two grandchildren. The expenses don't include the cost of clothing, food, school supplies and everyday requests for toys and treats. The souring economy is a sobering reality amid her limited resources. She realizes that sometimes the children will have to do without. — Kauai (HI) Garden Island, April 28, 2009

Read more at: <http://www.kauaiworld.com/articles/2009/04/28/news/kauai_news/doc49f692c26dadf377999607.txt>

· **Low-Cost Home Weather Proofing Gets Test in Portland**

In a trifecta push to create jobs, save energy and cut greenhouse gas emissions, the city of Portland and Multnomah County plan to start providing low-cost financing to homeowners this summer for energy efficiency and weatherization improvements in Portland homes. The goal of the so-called Clean Energy Fund is to overcome the biggest barriers to large-scale energy efficiency efforts: steep upfront costs, an uncertain payback and a general lack of information about how best to proceed. As envisioned, energy retrofits would be financed over the long term and the repayment tacked on to homeowners' monthly utility bills. The aim, initially at least, is to test the program with 500 homeowners, installing a basic package of insulation, air and duct sealing where the resulting energy savings would offset the financed cost of the improvements — meaning no extra monthly costs for consumers if their energy use doesn't change. — Portland (OR) Oregonian, April 29, 2009

Read more at: <http://www.oregonlive.com/business/index.ssf/2009/04/lowcost_home_weather_proofing.html>

Commentaries ...

· **This Old Wasteful House**

Never before has America had so many compelling reasons to preserve the homes in its older residential neighborhoods. We need to reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions. We want to create jobs, and revitalize the neighborhoods where millions of Americans live. All of this could be accomplished by making older homes more energy-efficient. Let's begin with energy consumption and emissions. Forty-three percent of America's carbon emissions come from heating, cooling, lighting and operating our buildings. Older homes are particularly wasteful: Homes built in 1939 or before use around 50 percent more energy per square foot than those constructed in 2000. But with significant improvements and retrofits, these structures could perform on a par with newer homes. — Richard Moe in the New York Times, April 5, 2009

Read more at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/06/opinion/06moe.html?em>>

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