



Building Bridges

NLIEC NEWS

May 31, 2009

Within the Energy Assistance Community ...

· **Good to Go for National Energy and Utility Affordability Conference!**

If you haven't registered yet, you can still attend the 2009 National Energy and Utility Affordability Conference June 15-17 in Portland, OR. It's an event you won't want to miss! Nearly 600 attendees already signed up to attend the nation's largest conference devoted to energy and utility affordability issues, however there's always room for more!

Monday's keynote luncheon speaker is Patricia Limerick, who chairs the board of the Center of the American West at the University of Colorado at Boulder, where she also is a professor of history. The NEUAC luncheon speaker Tuesday will be Steven J. Wright, the administrator and chief executive officer of the Bonneville Power Administration. The BPA is a federal agency under the U.S. Department of Energy and serves the Pacific Northwest, operating an extensive electricity transmission system and marketing wholesale electrical power at cost from federal dams, one non-federal nuclear plant and other nonfederal hydroelectric and wind energy generation facilities.

In addition to those speakers and a broad range of workshops in seven tracks, the conference will feature two plenary sessions related to energy policy and the local benefits of regional greenhouse gas initiatives, three poverty simulation sessions and a "sold out" tour of the Bonneville Dam.

How can you register to attend the conference? Go to <https://guest.cvent.com/EVENTS/Register/IdentityConfirmation.aspx?e=70014ad5-e80c-4b9b-b74b-f0402264d405> to register online or download the registration form available at http://www.energyandutilityconference.org/2009%20Conference/Registration%20Form_042009.pdf and fax it to the Gove Group, the NEUAC conference managers, at 412-431-5214.

· **FPL Group Hires Former FERC Chairman for New VP Position**

Former Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Chairman Joseph Kelliher is joining FPL Group Inc. (FPL) to head up the Florida-based utility's federal regulatory operations. The move comes as Congress

is set to debate a cap-and-trade program regarding carbon-dioxide and other emissions. At the same time, FPL has become the nation's largest solar and wind power generator.

Chairman and Chief Executive Lewis Hay III noted, "Federal regulatory issues are increasingly complex and affect the company in new ways as we have grown to encompass energy operations in 27 states." Kelliher served 3.5 years as FERC chairman under President George W. Bush, departing the post in January. During that time, the agency was restructured and more steps regarding oversight and reliability standards were taken, according to an FPL statement. Kelliher previously spent time as an Energy Department official and House Commerce Committee attorney. FPL Group is the parent of the **Florida Power & Light Company**, a member of the National Low Income Energy Consortium Board of Directors. — *Wall Street Journal*, May 7, 2009

Read more at: <<http://online.wsj.com/article/BT-CO-20090507-720604.html>>

<http://nuclearstreet.com/blogs/nuclear_power_news/archive/2009/05/11/zfpl.aspx>

<http://www.energy-business-review.com/news/fpl_group_appoints_joseph_kelliher_as_evp_of_federal_regulatory_affairs_090507>

In Washington ...

• **House Energy and Commerce Committee Approves American Clean Energy and Security Act**

The House Energy and Commerce Committee has approved the American Clean Energy and Security Act, sending it to the full House for consideration. The legislation, introduced by Reps. Henry Waxman (D-CA) and Edward Markey (D-MA), would place a cap on climate change emissions to reduce global warming.

As part of this process, energy prices would increase for all forms of energy and, according to advocates for households in need, would place additional burdens on low income families. Sections 431 and 432 of the bill authorize two provisions to help low-income families offset these higher charges. The first would provide a refundable "energy tax credit" for families eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit. The second would provide an energy refund for low income families who do not pay taxes. These would include the disabled, low-income elderly and very poor families with children. These families would receive a benefit through either the state electronic benefit system or through cash payments deposited into their bank accounts. The target population is essentially families with incomes below 150 percent of the federal poverty level. Congress could move aggressively on this legislation; the full House could act before the July 4th recess.

Read more at: <<http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=2822>>

In the States ...

• **Discounts, Protections Available to Low Income in Texas**

Low-income electric customers in areas of Texas where there is retail competition are eligible for LITE-UP Texas, a discount on electric bills from May through August. This is the third year the summer discount has been provided, funded through a system benefit charge on electric bills. Eligible

households must be at or below 125 percent of federal poverty guidelines or receive certain means-tested benefits.

Additionally, for the third consecutive year, TXU Energy, one of the largest utilities in Texas, has declared a summer moratorium (July 1 through September 30) on disconnects for customers designated as low-income, ill or disabled or who are at least 62 years of age.

The utility also announced that more flexible deferred payment plans are available to these customers. Customers enrolled in the moratorium will not be required to pay electric bills during the program period; TXU will require payment of 25 percent of the deferred summer bills with the first electric bill issued after September 30th, with the remaining balance to be paid in equal installments over the next five bills. — *LIHEAP Clearinghouse, May 5, 2009*

Read more at: <<http://www.liheap.ncat.org/news/may09/txu.htm>>

- **Maryland LIHEAP Has Record Enrollment**

The Maryland Department of Human Resources, the LIHEAP grantee, announced record-breaking numbers of people served through the Maryland LIHEAP, also called Maryland Energy Assistance Program. By the end of the 2009 program year, more than 144,000 households will have applied for energy assistance. For the previous program year, 128,168 households applied.

As of April, 108,000 households were eligible for assistance and received an average grant of \$564. Compared to the same time period last year, this is an increase of 16,000 more households.

Statistics were not provided for Maryland's Electric Universal Service Program, funded by ratepayer and state dollars, which provides electric bill payments to MEAP-eligible households. However, enrollment for that program was expected to increase to over 110,000 households, compared to about 100,000 for FY 2008. — *LIHEAP Clearinghouse, May 15, 2009*

- **Alaska Provides \$9 Million for Energy Assistance**

Alaska will provide an extra \$9 million in short-term energy aid to low- and middle-income state residents. Governor Sarah Palin on May 21 signed several appropriations bills, including SB 116, a one-time special appropriation for energy assistance for the current fiscal year. The funding immediately goes to the Department of Health and Social Services, the LIHEAP grantee. The department administers the federal LIHEAP and the Alaska Heating Assistance Program (AHAP).

The Alaska LIHEAP serves households up to 150 percent of federal poverty guidelines; the AHAP serves those between 151 and 225 percent of FPG. AHAP was created by the legislature in May 2008. Supporters stated in newspaper articles that energy needs were especially critical in the state's rural areas and that some residents were forced to burn oily rags, cardboard and wax-soaked wood chips to heat their homes this winter. — *LIHEAP Clearinghouse, May 22, 2009*

- **Iowa Governor Signs Bill Authorizing Franchise Fees**

A measure signed into law by Gov. Chet Culver has given Iowa cities more flexibility in assessing

franchise fees for gas and electric utilities, but they are limited in what they can charge. Culver signed the measure late Tuesday, capping the amount a city can charge as a franchise fee at 5 percent of customer's bills without regard to costs for operating the utility.

Communities have previously been allowed to charge fees to cover the costs of operating, maintaining and regulating a utility. The question dates to 2004, when attorney Brad Schroeder filed a lawsuit on behalf of Lisa Kragnes, a single mother and Des Moines resident who questioned why the franchise fee was on her bill. Polk County District Court Judge Michael Huppert ruled in 2006 that the fee was an illegal tax and that city couldn't collect from Kragnes, but the city appealed and the Iowa Supreme Court returned the case back to district court. — *Associated Press*, May 27, 2009

Read more at: <http://www.forbes.com/feeds/ap/2009/05/27/ap6471011.html>

- **Oregon Energy Assistance Snapshot Released**

The Community Action Partnership of Oregon has released its *2009 Oregon Low-Income Energy Assistance Snapshot* on the status of low-income energy assistance programs in Oregon during the week of January 12-16, 2009. Among the report's findings were that agencies report that, even with increased energy assistance funding from LIHEAP as well as utility ratepayers, there still remains insufficient funding to meet the needs of low-income Oregon households.

Agencies estimate they will be able to serve only about one-half of those eligible. The maximum income level is 60 percent of state median income—\$20,228 for one person, \$38,899 for a family of four. The report also said that compared to this time last year, applications for energy assistance had risen by over 25 percent. It said more than 9,000 households were on waiting lists for assistance with thousands scheduled for appointments through February, noting that the number is significantly understated because many agencies do not keep waiting lists. — *LIHEAP Clearinghouse*, May 29, 2009

Read more at: <http://www.liheap.ncat.org/news/may09/oregon.htm>

- **New Jersey Board of Public Utilities to Allocate Ongoing RGGI Funding**

The New Jersey Board of Public Utilities has decided to make additional energy assistance funds available throughout the remainder of 2009. The grants will come via funding from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). New Jersey participates in the coalition with Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states.

At its May 14th meeting, Board of Public Utilities President Jeanne Fox and the board's commissioners acknowledged the acute economic challenges faced by many New Jersey families. The board will continue to make funds available for these households, many of which fall through the cracks of other assistance programs, through ongoing quarterly auctions. The decision to extend electric bill assistance was, in part, because federal stimulus money targeted at weatherization, conservation and energy assistance does not include provision for household electric utility assistance.

In December, the Board of Public Utilities allocated \$2.8 million to New Jersey SHARES. Over the next year, the board could allocate as much as \$12 to \$14 million in RGGI funding to help families in

need of electric bill assistance. — *New Jersey SHARES' Sharing Neighborhoods newsletter*, May 29, 2009

In the News ...

· **New Program Provides a Glimmer of Light**

For Lisle, Illinois, resident and single mother Marnie Jamison, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program is part of the reason she can afford to be an unemployed foster mother. Jamison and hundreds of other people receive LIHEAP assistance on a regular basis from Lisle Township, which also makes up the northeast corner of Naperville. This year, the township has had 476 applicants for the program, up from 404 last year, said Laura Pantaleo, township caseworker. There will likely be more applicants before the program officially ends May 31. — *Associated Press*, May 11, 2009

Read more at: <http://www.suburbanchicagonews.com/napervillesun/news/1567636,6_1_NA11_LIHEAP_S1.article>

· **Agency has More Funds Than Ever to Serve Clients, Create Jobs**

Like most of the clients it serves, Community Action of Ventura County is used to having just enough money to survive. But not this year. The agency went from a \$2.5 million budget in 2008 to about \$7 million this fiscal year. In large part because of the federal economic stimulus bill, the nonprofit is in a rare position. “We’ve always just barely had enough,” said Socorro Lopez Hanson, executive director of the nonprofit. “This is a great opportunity for us to help so many more people.” The nonprofit helped 2,185 families last year and expects to triple that this year, she said. — *Camarillo (CA) Ventura County Star*, May 13, 2009

Read more at: <<http://www.venturacountystar.com/news/2009/may/13/nxxfcpovertymoney13/>>

· **Families Struggling to Pay Power Bills**

The economic crisis could mean lights out for a record number of Florida families struggling to pay their energy bills. According to a study released by the National Energy Assistance Directors’ Association, energy costs are becoming less affordable, more families are making dangerous sacrifices to pay their energy bills and more are seeking assistance. In Florida, the federal allocation for energy assistance has nearly tripled from last year, to almost \$102 million. NEADA executive director Mark Wolfe says the additional federal money will help, but people still face difficult choices. — *Seminole (FL) Tampa Bay Newspapers*, May 13, 2009

Read more at: <http://www.tbnweekly.com/content_articles/051309_fpg-02.txt>

· **1,500 Helped With LIHEAP for Home Heat**

Marshall County, Tennessee, residents in 587 homes, perhaps 1,500 people, were helped by an expanded federal program that paid heating bills this past winter, according to a leader of the agency making emergency payments. However, as its name implies, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) doesn’t just pay heating bills. It’s also for electric bills for residents’ air conditioning units, LIHEAP Director Cathy Hayes says from her office in Fayetteville.

In December, Gov. Phil Bredesen announced the state was making funds available to LIHEAP on a matching basis. For every dollar raised locally, the state would pay \$2 it received in federal money to immediately help pay winter heating bills. Responses from churches, the Lewisburg City Council, Marshall County Commission, Duck River Electric Co-op and the Lewisburg Electric Department exceeded the anticipated allocation for Marshall County, Hayes said. — *Lewisburg (TN) Marshall County Tribune*, May 15, 2009

Read more at: <<http://www.marshalltribune.com/story/1539495.html>>

- **Local Low-income Energy Program Goes Unused**

The City of Farmington, NM, spent \$45,000 to give low-income households free energy-efficient light bulbs, but few people have enrolled in the program. On Monday, only 19 households out of 415 were participating in a program in which 10 compact fluorescent light bulbs are given away to low-income people, according to Farmington Electric Utility System officials. City councilors unanimously approved the program in January. People could save about \$139 annually if they use compact fluorescent light bulbs instead of incandescent ones, according to Electric Utility officials. The light bulbs could save the city \$500,000 through 15 years with the bulbs. “We’re not having much success,” said Maude Grantham-Richards, the Electric Utility’s director, at a City Council meeting last month. “Either people don’t like them or it’s too much trouble.” . — *Farmington (NM) Daily Times*, May 19, 2009

Read more at: <http://www.daily-times.com/ci_12400511>

- **Recession Leads to Uptick in Utility Shut-offs in New Jersey**

These days, washing the dishes at the Schultheis house means filling 5-gallon water jugs at a neighbor’s house and lugging them across the street. Using the toilet means dumping a bucket of water by hand into the tank before each flush. When the family wants to shower, it needs to impose on sympathetic friends. The town water department shut off the Schultheises’ water about a month ago after the family fell behind on payments on a \$1,700 overdue bill.

John Schultheis — a computer programmer who has been out of work for three years — watched in disbelief as town workers turned off the water valve near the curb of his three-bedroom bungalow in a quiet middle-class neighborhood in the Lake Hiawatha section of Parsippany.

As the recession continues, utility companies say a growing number of New Jerseyans are falling behind on their electric, gas and water bills. For many, a flood of emergency funding in state and federal aid programs — coupled with a state-imposed moratorium on utility shut-offs during the winter months — has helped keep the lights on and the water flowing over the last few months. — *Newark (NJ) Star-Ledger*, May 24, 2009

Read more at: <http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2009/05/these_days_washing_the_dishes.html>

- **States, Nonprofits Jockey for “Weatherizing” Funds**

President Barack Obama wants to make a million houses a year more energy efficient as part of his

goal to create thousands of “green” jobs and reduce U.S. carbon emissions. But the administration’s push to expand an obscure antipoverty program into a centerpiece of that initiative is stirring debate over the best way to use a flash flood of federal stimulus dollars.

Texas is slated to get \$327 million over the next two years to help cut poor families' utility bills by “weatherizing” their homes. Nonprofit groups affiliated with the federal Weatherization Assistance Program are set to get a big funding boost and say they are up to the task.

But Texas and some other states don’t want simply to supersize existing programs and also are proposing what they say are more efficient ways to use the stimulus money. Indiana and Missouri are asking nonprofit groups to compete for some or all of the funds; Wisconsin plans to use some of its allocation to tackle low-income apartment buildings and is hoping to dedicate \$10 million toward replacing appliances. — *Wall Street Journal*, May 28, 2009

Read more at: <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124346403073960129.html>

Commentaries ...

· **Help is Available for Families Facing Poverty in Oregon**

Many Oregonians are facing a stark reality: Real-world costs for housing, food, child care, health insurance and transportation are often twice the federal poverty threshold for Oregon counties — a significant revelation — contained in the most recent Report on Poverty. The federal poverty threshold is \$14,291 for a single parent with a young child in our state. But the report (compiled by Oregon Housing and Community Services) tells us that even a small family of one parent and one child must pay almost \$32,000 to cover their basic costs of living without assistance. — Victor Merced and Bruce Goldberg in the *Salem (OR) Statesman Journal*, May 22, 2009

Read more at: <http://www.statesmanjournal.com/article/20090522/OPINION/905220317/1049>

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