
National Fuel Funds Network

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ACTION ALERT

House LIHEAP Supporters Seek at Least \$5.1 Billion for FY 2011

Also, your help needed to build the case for LIHEAP funds

LIHEAP supporters in the House of Representative have written other House members to join them in asking Appropriations Committee leaders to provide at least \$5.1 billion for LIHEAP in FY 2011. The National Fuel Funds Network supports the funding level of \$7.6 billion for FY 2011. The letter is an important step in moving to \$7.6 billion from the Administration's request of \$3.2 billion. The Network asks that you contact your US Representative and request that she or he sign the Dear Colleague letter initiated by Representatives James Oberstar, Michael Castle, Ed Markey and Carolyn McCarthy. All Representatives may be reached at 202-224-3121 or through <<http://www.house.gov>> .

To sign on the letter, Representatives should contact Mr. Morgan Gray of Rep. Ed Markey's staff at Morgan.Gray@mail.house.gov or 225-4012 by COB March 18, 2010.

At present, co-signers include the four originators plus Jerrold Nadler (D-NY), Patrick Kennedy (D-RI), John Hall (D-NY), Carney (D-PA), McMahon (D-NY), Serrano (D-NY), Maloney (D-NY), James Langevin (D-RI), David Wu (D-OR), Charlie Wilson (D-Ohio), David Scott (D-GA), Leonard Lance (R-NJ), Russ Carnahan (D-MO), Emmanuel Cleaver (D-MO), Sander Levin (D-MI), and Dennis Moore (D-KS). If your Representative is on this list, please thank them for signing.

Rep. Ed Markey has introduced H.R. 4554, the Energy Assistance for American Families Act, which would authorize LIHEAP at the \$7.6 billion level for fiscal years 2001 – 2014. The bill currently has 35 co-sponsors. Representatives wishing to sponsor the measure can also contact Morgan Gray.

The Dear Colleague letter and the draft letter to appropriations leaders are below.

Help in documenting LIHEAP's impact

The National Fuel Funds Network is partnering with the Campaign for Home Energy Assistance to collect stories and information from LIHEAP supporters. **Please take a few minutes and take the short survey** <<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/DQRP7WP>> .

The organizations need this information to help Congress and the Administration understand the impact that increased funding for LIHEAP is having across the country. The Network and the Campaign will forward the local stories to appropriate Congressional offices, in fact sheets that we send to Congressional delegations and in Congressional testimony. Please forward this survey along to those who may want to participate. There is no deadline, but information received within two weeks will be particularly useful.

Re-configured LIHEAP Action Day

Please watch your email soon for word of the re-configuration of NFFN's LIHEAP Action Day that was canceled February 10 due to snowstorms. Your participation in the above activities is part the re-configured action for LIHEAP.

Support the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

March 1, 2010

Dear Colleague:

We invite you to join us in sending the attached letter to the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Subcommittee. We are requesting that the Committee provide at least \$5.1 billion in formula funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and sufficient contingency funds in fiscal year (FY) 2011.

LIHEAP helps low-income families and seniors remain healthy and secure from bitter cold winters in the North and hot summers in the South. Many low-income families, disabled individuals, and senior citizens living on fixed incomes, face unaffordable home energy costs—spending up to 17 percent of their income on home energy bills.

The number of households served is expected to reach record levels again this year. According to National Energy Assistance Directors' Association, states expect to serve about 9.5 million households with heating assistance. This represents a 25% increase over last year and an additional 1.9 million households. The rapid increase in the number of households served reflects the rise in unemployment, as well as continuing high home energy prices.

If you would like to sign the letter, please have your staff e-mail or call Morgan Gray on Rep. Markey's staff at Morgan.Gray@mail.house.gov or x5-4012 by **COB March 18, 2010**.

Sincerely,

/S/
Rep. James L. Oberstar, Co-Chair
Northeast-Midwest Congressional Coalition

/S/
Rep. Michael N. Castle
Northeast-Midwest Congressional Coalition

/S/
Rep. Edward J. Markey, Chair
Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming

/S/

Rep. Carolyn McCarthy, Chair
Subcommittee on Healthy Families and Communities

March 19, 2010

The Honorable David R. Obey
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services and Education
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Todd Tiahrt
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services and Education
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Tiahrt:

The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) provides a vital safety net for our nation's low-income households. LIHEAP helps low-income families and seniors remain healthy and secure from bitter cold winters in the North and hot summers in the South. We are writing to request that the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations bill provide at least \$5.1 billion for LIHEAP in formula grants for fiscal year (FY) 2011, the funding levels set forth in the last authorization approved for this program. Additionally, we ask that you consider providing sufficient contingency funds necessary to enable the program to function at its current capacity.

Funding LIHEAP at this level in regular funding and advance appropriations can help working low-income families, senior citizens, and disabled individuals maintain economic stability. Many low-income families, disabled individuals, and senior citizens living on fixed incomes face unaffordable home energy costs—spending up to 17 percent of their income on home energy bills. The number of households is expected to again reach record levels this year. According to National Energy Assistance Directors' Association, states expect to serve about 9.5 million households with heating assistance. This represents a 25% increase over last year and an additional 1.9 million households. The rapid increase in the number of household services reflects the rise in unemployment, as well as, continuing high home energy prices.

Families Struggle to Pay High Home Energy Bills

Energy prices have continued to remain high and unaffordable for many Americans. According to data provided by the US Energy Information Administration, home energy prices have increased by almost 50 percent in the past five years – from \$681 during the winter of 2002-03 to \$990 last year, and they are expected to remain at about the same level this coming winter.

Low income families struggle to pay their home energy bills and LIHEAP is the one way that many manage to do so. A recent survey by the state LIHEAP directors of more than 1,200 poor families found that 32% went without food for at least a day, 42% went without medical or dental care and 38% did not fill prescription or took less than the full dose of medicine. Meanwhile, the average LIHEAP grant is about \$540 and only about 15 percent of eligible households receive this vital assistance.

In addition, the program helps low-income homeowners weatherize their homes to save energy and lower their energy burden. On average, weatherization reduces energy usage while also reducing heating bills by 31 percent and overall energy bills by \$200 to \$250 per year.

Energy is a basic need, and without LIHEAP assistance, low-income families, the disabled, and senior citizens face the impossible choice between paying their home energy bills or affording other basic necessities such as prescription drugs, housing, and food.

Finally, advance LIHEAP funding enables states to pre-purchase fuel and to start planning for the winter heating season in spring and early summer and improves program management. It also ensures that states provide timely assistance to

low-income families who cannot afford to wait.

Thank you for your continued support of this program and for consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

George Coling, Executive Director
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