

**Subject:** <no subject>

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## *National Fuel Funds Network*

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### **ACTION ALERT**

### **Senate and House leaders to ask President for release of LIHEAP emergency funds**

January 5, 2010

LIHEAP champions in both the House and Senate are seeking signatures on a Dear Colleague letter to the President to release the \$590 million in LIHEAP emergency contingency funds in the FY 2010 appropriation. The reasons for doing so are compelling – from the draft

Senate letter:

“More families are in need of and receiving LIHEAP benefits than ever before. According to the National Energy Assistance Directors Association (NEADA), states assisted more than 8 million households last year, nearly a one-thirds increase over fiscal year 2008. Furthermore, NEADA anticipates a 20 percent increase in LIHEAP applications this year. Even at the record appropriations levels passed by Congress the last two years, demand for the LIHEAP program continues to exceed funding. Accordingly, states will be able to spend contingency funding immediately.”

The letter refers to the NEADA study released on December 18, which is available <<http://www.neada.org>>. The study points out that due to the record LIHEAP funding level of \$5.1 billion in FY 2009, “Eleven states reported increases of more than 50%: [e.g.,] California 162%, Texas 122%, Florida 104%, Nevada 80%, Arizona 80%, Oklahoma 76.3%[.]” The study helped generate a December 27 New York Times editorial that supports the release of the contingency funds and calls for an additional \$2.5 in supplemental funding for FY 2010. See [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/28/opinion/28mon2.html?\\_r=1&ref=opinion](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/28/opinion/28mon2.html?_r=1&ref=opinion).

The Senate LIHEAP champions circulating the letter are Senators Jack Reed (D-RI) and Olympia Snowe (R-ME), Co-Chairs of the Senate Northeast-Midwest Coalition and Representatives James Oberstar (D-MN) and Steven LaTourette (R-OH), the co-chairs of the Northeast-Midwest Congressional Coalition, are also circulating the House Dear Colleague letter.

**Please contact your Senators and Representatives** at 202-224-3121 or through their

websites and **ask that they sign the Reed-Snowe or Oberstar-LaTourette letter** to the President. The Senate deadline is COB Wednesday, January 6, which may slip, and the House Deadline is COB Friday, January 8.

To sign on the Senate letter, Senators should contact Chris Hickling, Legislative Director, Northeast Midwest Senate Coalition at 202-224-0606 or <mailto:chris\_hickling@reed.senate.gov>. In the House, Mary C. Cronin, Legislative Director, Northeast-Midwest Congressional Coalition at 202-226-6795 or <mailto:mary.cronin@mail.house.gov>, is collecting signatures.

The letters are below. NFFN will keep you informed of progress. Thank you for your action to provide needed LIHEAP funds.

Please help the additional \$2.5 billion this winter and needed FY 2011 funds come to fruition by **registering today for NFFN's LIHEAP Action Day, February 10, 2010** at <http://www.nationalfuelfunds.org>.

##### Senate Dear Colleague Letter #####

January 6, 2010

The President  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to thank you for your support of aid to low-income families, specifically your approval of the recently-passed Consolidated Appropriations Act. That bill includes \$5.1 billion for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) – the highest funding level in the history of the program. This appropriation includes more than \$590 million in LIHEAP contingency funding. We urge you to release these resources as soon as possible to address the needs of families and seniors who are struggling in the current economic crisis. In addition, we ask that you dedicate sufficient funds for this program in your Fiscal Year 2011 budget request.

More families are in need of and receiving LIHEAP benefits than ever before. According to the National Energy Assistance Directors Association (NEADA), states assisted more than 8 million households last year, nearly a one-thirds increase over fiscal year 2008. Furthermore, NEADA anticipates a 20 percent increase in LIHEAP applications this year. Even at the record appropriations levels passed by Congress the last two years, demand for the LIHEAP program continues to exceed funding. Accordingly, states will be able to spend contingency funding immediately.

The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Act of 1981 instructs that the LIHEAP contingency fund be used assist the *“needs of one or more States arising from a natural disaster or other emergency.”* The

law states that economic conditions, such as increased unemployment and layoffs, as well increased participation in public benefits such as food stamps, merit the release of LIHEAP contingency funds. Clearly these conditions have been met. The most recent USDA food stamp data indicates that, a record 37 million people – approximately one in eight Americans – received food stamps in September. Moreover, many states have experienced unemployment rates that have exceeded the national average for several months. In releasing these funds, we urge to give consideration to targeting assistance based on economic conditions, as well as extreme weather events.

Releasing emergency LIHEAP funding – supplementing block grant funding already being spent in every state – will help thousands of families and seniors with their energy bills, and in doing so, create a noticeable economic multiplier. Less burdened by energy bills, these low-income families have more to spend on other essentials, and can avoid the choice between paying energy bills and putting food on their table.

Due to the clear economic benefit and demonstrated need, we also urge you to include full funding for LIHEAP in your Fiscal Year 2011 Budget request, the same level that Congress has provided over the last two years.

For many years, LIHEAP has been a vital safety net for low-income families and seniors. In these tough economic times, the program is more important than ever. As such, we respectfully request that you release LIHEAP funding to meet the immediate, emergency needs, and urge you to as maintain the federal commitment to low-income energy assistance.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

##### House Dear Colleague Letter #####

January 8, 2010

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to thank you for your support of Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) aid to low-income families and urge you to release the contingency resources as soon as possible to address the needs of families and seniors who are struggling in the current economic crisis. The recently-passed Consolidated Appropriations Act includes \$5.1 billion for LIHEAP—the highest funding level in the history of the program—of which more than \$590 million is dedicated to LIHEAP contingency funding. We urge you to release these resources as soon as possible and we ask that you dedicate sufficient funds for this program in your fiscal year 2011 budget request.

More families are in need of and receiving LIHEAP benefits than ever before. According to the National Energy Assistance Directors Association (NEADA), states assisted more than 8 million households last year, nearly a one-third increase over fiscal year 2008. Furthermore, NEADA anticipates a 20 percent increase in LIHEAP applications this year. Even at the record appropriations levels passed by Congress in the last two years, demand for LIHEAP assistance continues to exceed funding.

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George Coling, Executive Director  
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