

THE LIHEAP COALITION

Organizations and companies supporting the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program

DATE: November 9, 2010

FROM: LIHEAP Coalition Co-Chairs, Olivia Wein and Pat Markey

RE: LIHEAP Coalition Alert: Need Calls to Your Governor TODAY Regarding a LIHEAP Sign-On Letter to House and Senate Leadership Seeking \$5.1B billion for LIHEAP in FY 2011

Dear LIHEAP Advocate,

We need your help to protect LIHEAP funding from drastic funding cuts in FY 2011. There is sign-on letter being circulated to the Governors urging the House and Senate leadership to preserve LIHEAP funding in FY 2011 at \$5.1 billion (of which \$4.5 billion would fund the regular program). A copy of the letter is attached below. Some of you may recollect a similar letter circulated in 2007 with 35 Governors' supporting that effort. We are aiming for a similar result with this letter.

Action:

Please contact your Governor's office TODAY and urge him or her to sign on to this very important LIHEAP funding letter. Members of Congress return to the Hill next week. **The deadline for your Governor to sign on to this letter is COB Friday, November 12.** Governors' offices should contact Tess Moore at the National Governors' Association at tmoore@nga.org to be added to the letter.

Background:

Current funding for the FY 2011 LIHEAP program is drastically reduced from the past two years when the program was funded at a total of \$5.1 billion. As reported in our October 27, LIHEAP Coalition Update, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) released \$1.854 billion in first quarter LIHEAP block grant funds under the FY 2011 Continuing Resolution (CR), which was signed by President Obama on September 30, 2010. This short-term CR (P.L. 111-242) provides for the continued operation of government programs until December 3, 2010. While the House Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee provided for \$5.1 billion for LIHEAP funding, the Senate Appropriations Committee recommended \$3.3 billion for LIHEAP (\$2.709 billion for the regular state block grant and \$590 million for the LIHEAP emergency contingency funding). The Office of Management and Budget ultimately provided first quarter LIHEAP allocations based on the lower Senate number for the block grant, in order to avoid restricting Congressional funding prerogatives.

The following letter is being circulated right now to the Governors in the states.

November XX, 2010

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
U.S Senate

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable John Boehner
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Senator Reid, Senator McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, and Representative Boehner,

As you work to finalize funding levels for FY 2011, we urge you to provide at least the current FY 2010 funding level of \$5.1 billion for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), including \$4.5 for the block grant program as well as sufficient contingency funds to address unforeseen energy emergencies. Should enactment of a continuing resolution become necessary, we urge you to continue LIHEAP funding at the FY2010 level of \$5.1 billion. We understand the budget challenges facing Congress, and deeply appreciate your longstanding support for LIHEAP. Given the continuing challenges facing our economy, this program is more essential than ever in providing a critical lifeline to those vulnerable households struggling to pay home energy bills.

LIHEAP provides heating and cooling assistance to low-income households, with benefits targeting the elderly, disabled, and families that are often forced to choose between paying for heating or cooling bills and food, medicine, and other essential needs. As governors, we have worked over the years to help assure that our most vulnerable residents are not overwhelmed by the volatile nature of home energy costs. This has often meant significant state contributions to emergency relief funds or supplementing existing state-federal programs.

In recent years, states across the country have seen an increase in the number of households requesting LIHEAP assistance. This trend will likely continue given the lingering effects of the economic downturn along with increases in home energy costs. For this winter alone, EIA projects that average household expenditures for space heating fuels will increase 4 percent for natural gas, 12 percent for home heating oil, and 2.5 percent overall. A decrease in overall program funding will force more LIHEAP households to face potential shut-offs or the loss of fuel delivery.

We greatly appreciate your consideration and continued commitment to helping our neediest families. We hope that you take this opportunity to actively support LIHEAP by level funding this critical program at \$5.1 billion.

Thank you for your strong support of the LIHEAP program.

Sincerely,

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