

April 20, 2010

The Honorable John M. Spratt, Jr.  
Chairman  
Committee on the Budget  
U.S. House of Representatives  
207 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515-6065

The Honorable Paul Ryan  
Ranking Member  
Committee on the Budget  
U.S. House of Representatives  
B71 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515-6065

Dear Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Ryan:

As Congress moves forward on its budget process for FY2011, the Coalition of Northeastern Governors (CONEG) recognizes the difficult task facing the Committee in crafting a budget document. That document must simultaneously address the nation's pressing domestic and international needs and take meaningful steps to manage the federal deficit. Cognizant of this challenge, we respectfully request the Committee to provide adequate budget levels for Function 400-Transportation and Function 600-Income Security to ensure, at a minimum, the current level of funding for a number of critical surface transportation and rail programs, and for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

The governors request that the Committee provide a funding level for Function 400 that will maintain at least current funding levels for federal highway, transit, Amtrak and intercity high speed passenger rail programs in FY2011. A number of surface transportation and aviation authorization and reform programs currently before the Congress will, if enacted this year, have implications for program funding as early as FY2011. Adequate funding for federal surface transportation and intercity passenger rail programs is vital for the long-standing federal-state partnership that built and maintains the nation's transportation system. Sustained investments in these programs contribute to the retention and creation of domestic jobs and to the productivity of the nation's economy.

We also request that the Committee provide a funding level for Function 600 that will permit the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) to be funded at least at current levels. LIHEAP continues to be a vital safety net for millions of vulnerable low-income households across the nation – the elderly and disabled living on fixed incomes, the working poor, and families with young children. These households already face unaffordable home energy costs, and the current economic crisis exerts additional pressures on these households. Without current LIHEAP funding levels in FY2011, more than 1.5 million families could lose the modest LIHEAP assistance, or overall benefit levels would be reduced.

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The Honorable Paul Ryan

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Therefore, we request the Committee to provide adequate funding levels to ensure, at a minimum, the current level of funding for federal highway, transit, Amtrak and intercity high speed rail programs, and for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

Sincerely,

/o.s./  
Donald L. Carcieri  
Chair  
Governor of Rhode Island

/o.s./  
John H. Lynch  
Vice-Chair  
Governor of New Hampshire

*An identical letter was sent to the leadership of the Senate Committee on the Budget*