

December 14, 2007

The Honorable David Obey
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
2358 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6024

The Honorable James T. Walsh
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6024

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Walsh:

As you move to complete the omnibus appropriations bill for FY2008, the Coalition of Northeastern Governors (CONEG) urges you to retain increased funding for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) as provided in the Labor/HHS/Education and Related Agencies appropriations conference report at the levels of \$1.98 billion for the regular program and \$431.5 million in contingency funding for energy emergencies. We also urge you to support the request for an additional \$1 billion for LIHEAP provided as emergency supplemental spending. We recognize the extremely difficult fiscal challenges that the Subcommittee faces at this time, and appreciate your support for this program. However, increased LIHEAP funding is urgently needed at this time to meet the immediate needs of vulnerable, low-income households across the nation.

The continued rise in home energy prices is straining the ability of states to reach even a fraction of the low-income and elderly households that need home energy assistance. The rising cost of home energy severely erodes the purchasing price of the LIHEAP dollar. As bitter winter weather sets in, many states already face the difficult decision of serving fewer households, reducing the level of the LIHEAP benefit, or closing the program early. Some Northeast states will run out of funds this month, and others face a similar situation in January. With higher energy prices expected to continue in 2008, currently available LIHEAP funds will not be adequate to meet continued needs throughout the year for heating and cooling assistance.

The Governors thank you for your past support of the LIHEAP program, and urge you to support increased funding for LIHEAP in the FY2008 omnibus appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

/o.s./
Jon S. Corzine
Chair
Governor of New Jersey

/o.s./
Jim Douglas
Vice-Chair
Governor of Vermont

/o.s./
John Lynch
Lead Governor for LIHEAP
Governor of New Hampshire

cc: Representative Jerry Lewis

Identical letters were sent to the Senate Labor/HHS Subcommittee with copies provided to full Committee Leadership.