

January 29, 2008

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
528 Senate Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
361-A Senate Russell Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Byrd
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510-6025

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
S-112, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510-6025

Dear Majority Leader Reid, Republican Leader McConnell, Chairman Byrd and Ranking Member Cochran:

As the Senate considers the economic stimulus package, the Coalition of Northeastern Governors (CONEG) urges you to include the bipartisan request for an additional \$3.62 billion for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), specifically \$3.12 billion in regular program funds to fully fund LIHEAP and \$500 million in contingency funding. This level of funding will help meet the immediate needs of low-income households across the country, and it can be quickly and efficiently distributed by the states.

LIHEAP funding is targeted to low-income households that are especially hard hit by high home energy costs. The demand for this highly effective program continues to increase, but the steady rise of prices for home heating fuels has caused the purchasing power of the LIHEAP dollar to plummet. LIHEAP eligible households, particularly the elderly, disabled, and families with children, need immediate assistance to help mitigate the potential life-threatening emergencies and economic hardship that confront the nation's most vulnerable citizens.

Additional funds at this critical time will allow the states to provide the more than five million low-income households currently served by LIHEAP with a benefit level that offers meaningful assistance in managing their energy burden. Equally important, the additional funds will allow the states across the nation to offer immediate assistance to the millions of eligible households that cannot be served under current LIHEAP funding levels.

Additional LIHEAP funding can be quickly distributed and translated into spending in the local economies. The Northeast states have mechanisms in place to distribute these funds promptly to current LIHEAP households as well as households that are eligible but not currently receiving assistance. Additional LIHEAP assistance will permit more households to pay their home energy bills; heat their homes safely; and better manage daily demands on the household budget.

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Page Two
1/29/08

We urge you to support an economic stimulus package that includes \$3.12 billion for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, as well as \$500 million in LIHEAP contingency funds.

Regards,

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

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

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