

February 10, 2009

The Honorable Harry Reid  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
S-221 The Capitol Building  
Washington, DC 20510-7020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
S-230 The Capitol Building  
Washington, DC 20510-7010

The Honorable Daniel Inouye  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
S-131 Capitol Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
S-146 Capitol Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid, Minority Leader McConnell, Chairman Inouye, and Ranking Member Cochran:

As the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (H.R.1) moves to conference, the Coalition of Northeastern Governors (CONEG) urges you to provide funding for the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP), the State Energy Program (SEP), and the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) at the House-passed levels. These successful programs allow states to quickly and efficiently invest the economic recovery funds to create and sustain jobs, implement energy efficiency improvements, and provide relief to millions of Americans struggling with unaffordable home energy bills.

Specifically, the Governors urge you to provide funding for the Weatherization Assistance Program at a level of \$6.2 billion and to provide \$3.4 billion for the State Energy Program. Both of these proven programs can put these funds to work quickly, creating “green jobs” and achieving real savings by working with citizens and businesses to implement money-saving energy efficiency projects. A central objective of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act is to utilize existing funding mechanisms at the state level. Since the networks that implement these programs are already in place in each state, these programs are in an optimal position to put the economic recovery funds to use quickly and efficiently.

The Honorable Harry Reid  
The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
The Honorable Daniel Inouye  
The Honorable Thad Cochran

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The Governors also urge you to provide \$1 billion for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). These funds can swiftly be made available in the coming year to assist vulnerable citizens who are hit hard by this economic downturn and cannot afford the basic necessity of home energy – those on fixed incomes, the working poor, and increasingly, the unemployed. Economic recovery funds provided to the program can be rapidly distributed through the established LIHEAP network to eligible recipients for immediate use to pay for heating and cooling needs.

Sincerely,

/o.s./  
James H. Douglas  
Chair  
Governor of Vermont

/o.s./  
David A. Paterson  
Vice-chair  
Governor of New York

*Identical letters were also sent to House Leadership.*