

February 10, 2010

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

The Coalition of Northeastern Governors (CONEG) thanks you for the recent release of \$490 million in LIHEAP contingency funds. These funds provide needed relief for low-income and unemployed families facing unseasonably cold weather in many parts of the country. However, low-income households in the Northeast states continue to struggle with increasingly unaffordable home energy bills. Therefore, the Governors urge you to release the remaining \$100 million in contingency funds to help states provide meaningful assistance to low-income residents faced with burdensome home energy bills throughout the entire heating season.

In the Northeast, a greater percentage of households use delivered heating fuels, such as home heating oil, propane and kerosene, than in any other region of the country. According to the Energy Information Administration's (EIA) recent Short-Term Energy Outlook, the average Northeast household using fuel oil will spend nearly \$2,000 in heating costs this winter. That's more than double the national average expenditure for households heating with natural gas or electricity. Households using these delivered fuels also tend to have an extremely high energy burden, spending more than 17 percent of their income on home energy. In addition, these households do not have the benefit of a program comparable to a utility service shut-off moratorium. If a household cannot afford to purchase the home heating fuel, the delivery truck simply does not come.

The current economic situation exerts additional pressure on vulnerable households, making energy assistance more important now than ever before. Northeast states are seeing a greater demand for the LIHEAP program. Even with continued belt-tightening, there is just no room in the budget of these households to pay for increasing energy bills.

The Governors thank you for the recent release of LIHEAP funds, and we urge you to release the remaining \$100 million in LIHEAP contingency funds to help our states protect these vulnerable households as they face two more months of winter weather.

Sincerely,

/o.s./
David A. Paterson
Governor of New York
CONEG Chairman

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

/o.s./
John H. Lynch
Governor of New Hampshire
CONEG Lead Governor –
LIHEAP