

ENERGY ASSISTANCE

Soaring home heating

oil prices are forcing Connecticut families to choose between heating their homes and putting food on the table. There are more than 6 million New England households that rely on oil to heat their homes, thousands of them in Connecticut.

That is why I am a long-time supporter of the Low Income Heating and Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). This program provides critical financial assistance to individuals and families in Connecticut to help pay their energy bills.

LIHEAP Funding

Congress has taken a lead in protecting and promoting the LIHEAP program. This year, we were able to secure \$5.1 billion in LIHEAP funding for this winter, the most funding that has ever been provided for the program. This is nearly double the \$2.57 billion that Congress had provided for the program in FY2008. Thanks to the increased funding, Connecticut received over \$95 million in regular block grants, and over \$30 million for emergency contingency funds.

In September 2008, in the wake of soaring oil and gas prices, I called on President George W. Bush to release LIHEAP emergency funds. The President releases \$120 million to the states, \$6.9 million of which went to Connecticut. This brought the total federal funding for low-income heating assistance in Connecticut to more than \$135 million.

To learn how to apply for LIHEAP or for more information about the program, please visit the CT Department of Social Services website or the US Health and Human Services LIHEAP website.

Weatherization Assistance

The Weatherization

Assistance Program represents another effective measure to help homeowners address rising energy costs. Weatherization provides three important benefits: it lowers homeowners' bills by over \$400 every year for the life of the measures, reduces overall energy usage, and drives labor demand that can inject local economies with cash.

President Bush tried to end this program in the 2009 budget by eliminating its funding. But, in the face of such high energy costs, Congress restored funding to \$250 million above the previous year's level. Funding Weatherization Assistance will help bring both immediate and long-term energy relief to Connecticut families.