

Key Senate Vote Wed. on Increase to LIHEAP Funding!

As of Tuesday PM, Feb. 5, the U.S. Senate is scheduled to vote on the economic stimulus legislation on Wednesday. Senators Reed and Collins are expected to offer their amendment to add LIHEAP funding to the legislation. It now appears that the amendment will be for \$1 billion, split 50% - 50% between block grants and contingency funds.

A call has gone out to LIHEAP supporters and all parties concerned to contact your Senators and ask (or confirm) that they vote for the amendment. (The President has proposed a 22% LIHEAP budget cut.)

The President released his annual budget request to Congress earlier today. The FY 2009 request included \$1.7 billion for LIHEAP block grants and \$300 million for contingency funding. The total \$2.0 billion request is 22% less than the total \$2.57033 billion available for FY 2008. About \$160 million in contingency funds has not yet been committed. According to the National Energy Assistance Directors' Association, "The impact on low income households would be severe. States would have few choices but to either reduce the share of winter home costs covered from 36.3% to 28.2% or the number of households served by 1.2 million from 5.8 million to 4.6 million."

Concerned parties should contact Congressional Representatives and Senators and press for a LIHEAP appropriation of \$5.1 billion that would equal the maximum authorized amount, increase the national impact of the program, and bring the purchasing power of the LIHEAP dollar more in tune with rising home energy costs. Visit www.liheap.org for state-by-state fact sheets comparing LIHEAP's present impact with the impact if \$5.1 billion is appropriated. This action is particularly important if your Senator or Representative is a member of the Labor - HHS Appropriations Subcommittee and/or the Appropriations Committee.