

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 3, 2008

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to urge you to immediately release \$120 million available in the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) contingency fund to address the needs of families and seniors across the nation. Due to the urgency of this crisis, we request that you release funds immediately.

In some areas of the country, many families are still reeling from the high energy prices from this past winter. In other areas of the country, we have already seen hotter than normal temperatures. For low-income households, LIHEAP is an important safety net and will save many from making the tough choice between paying their energy bill or putting food on the table.

As you release contingency funds, we urge you to consider several factors: the threat of utility shutoffs for millions of households, families trying to pre-buy energy for the coming winter, continued high energy costs and the lack of leveraging money this year on which states were counting.

Record high energy costs have resulted in record numbers of households facing utility disconnection. The National Energy Assistance Directors Association (NEADA) estimates that more than 15.6 million households face utility shutoffs because they cannot pay their energy bills. Shutoff moratoria have run out in the states that have them. Many families are already experiencing this difficult situation and many more will face this prospect without additional LIHEAP funding.

Additionally, families in cold weather states who were able to pay this winter's bill are already preparing for next winter and are finding the costs of home heating to be out of reach. In its most recent Short-Term Energy Outlook, the Energy Information Administration (EIA) predicted that the cost of home heating oil will increase more than 41 percent from the 4th quarter of 2007 to the 4th quarter of 2008. This increase comes on top of the 162 percent increase in heating oil prices that occurred between January 2000 and March 2008. Recognizing that prices will continue to rise, many families are trying to be prudent by locking in lower fuel prices. If prices escalate during the winter, the burden will be even greater. An influx of LIHEAP money now will help those families plan ahead and be a more efficient use of federal funds.

In the immediate term, already-high energy costs are putting upward pressure on energy rates. Many utility companies have already or will soon increase their rates. In Virginia, Dominion Power has applied to raise rates 18 percent; in Missouri, AmerenUE asked for a 12.1

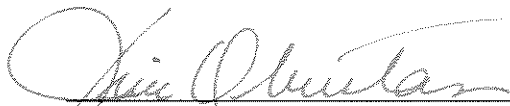
percent increase; in Oklahoma, Public Service Co. implemented a 25 percent increase on June 1; and in New York City, Con Edison expects a 13 percent increase this summer on the heels of a 4.7 percent rate increase in April.

Finally, we encourage you to consider assistance to states that were expecting – but will not receive – funding this fiscal year under the LIHEAP Leveraging Incentive Program. This program rewards states for supplementing their federal LIHEAP dollars through acquiring non-federal funds. However, the Department of Health and Human Services determined that the FY2008 Omnibus Appropriations Act (P.L. 110-161) did not authorize them to distribute leveraging grants. Unfortunately, HHS failed to provide adequate notice of this determination to states. As a result, states that planned for this money in their budget will be forced to serve fewer households at this critical time.

For all these reasons, we believe that it is of utmost importance that you release all available contingency funds now. Approximately \$100 million of the fund will expire at the end of the fiscal year. The other \$20 million in the contingency fund – left over from a FY2005 appropriations bill (P.L. 108-447) – does not expire, but we urge you to release it as well, given the clear need.

Thank you for your consideration of this vital issue.

Respectfully,



Rep. James L. Oberstar, Co-Chair
Northeast-Midwest Congressional Coalition



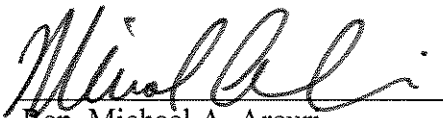
Rep. Steven C. LaTourette, Co-Chair
Northeast-Midwest Congressional Coalition



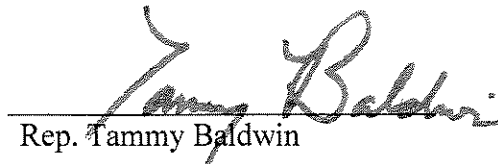
Rep. Thomas H. Allen



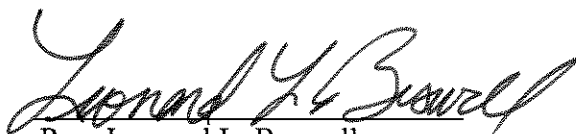
Rep. Jason Altmire



Rep. Michael A. Arcuri



Rep. Tammy Baldwin



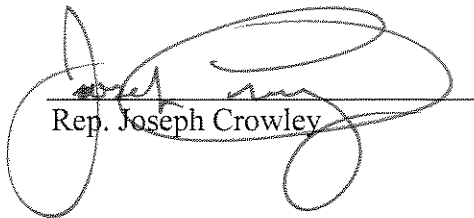
Rep. Leonard L. Boswell



Rep. Robert A. Brady



Rep. Russ Carnahan


Rep. Steve Cohen



Rep. Joseph Crowley


Rep. William D. Delahunt


Rep. Rosa L. DeLauro

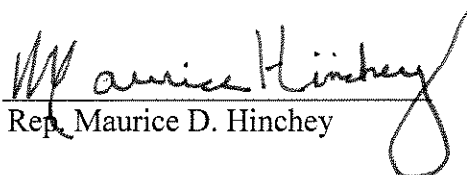

Rep. John D. Dingell


Rep. Keith Ellison


Rep. Vito Fossella

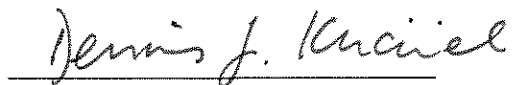

Rep. Phil Hare

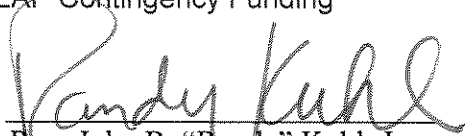

Rep. Brian Higgins

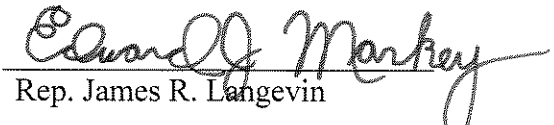

Rep. Maurice D. Hinchey



Rep. Paul W. Hodes


Rep. Dale E. Kildee


Rep. Dennis J. Kucinich

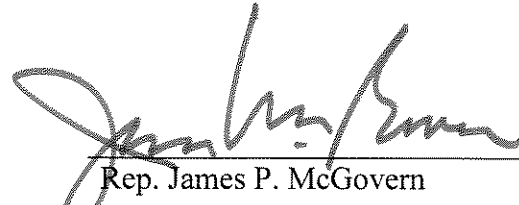

Rep. John R. "Randy" Kuhl, Jr.

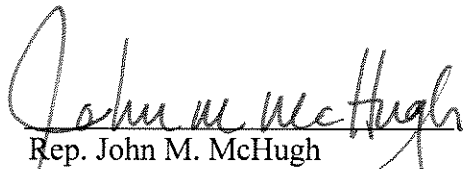

Rep. James R. Langevin


Rep. Sander M. Levin


Rep. Edward J. Markey



Rep. Carolyn McCarthy

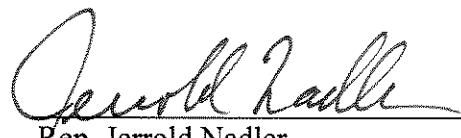

Rep. James P. McGovern

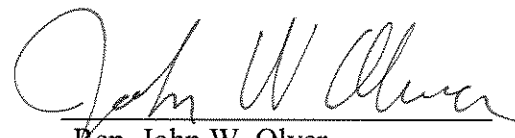

Rep. John M. McHugh


Rep. Michael H. Michaud

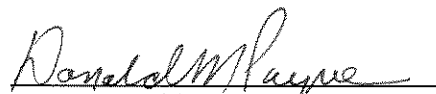

Rep. Brad Miller



Rep. Dennis Moore



Rep. Jerrold Nadler


Rep. John W. Olver

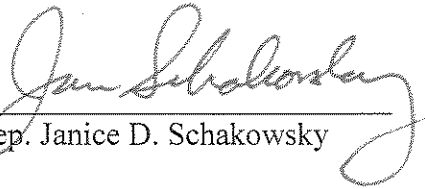

Rep. Bill Pascrell, Jr.


Rep. Donald M. Payne

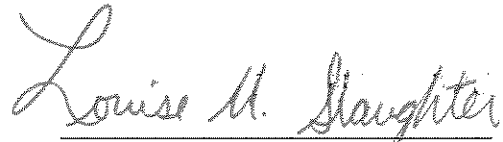

Rep. Mike Ross


Rep. Bobby L. Rush



Rep. Tim Ryan


Rep. Janice D. Schakowsky


Rep. Carol Shea-Porter

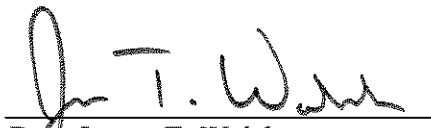

Rep. Louise McIntosh Slaughter


Rep. Betty Sutton



Rep. Stephanie Tubbs Jones


Rep. Michael R. Turner


Rep. Chris Van Hollen


Rep. James T. Walsh


Rep. Peter Welch


Rep. Charles A. Wilson


Rep. Tim Holden


Rep. Michael N. Castle


Rep. Betty McCollum