

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 20, 2011

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius
Secretary
United States Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Sebelius:

As you know, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is a vital safety net for many low income families. As state agencies prepare their LIHEAP programs for the coming winter, it is imperative that the Department of Health and Human Services immediately release as much LIHEAP funding as possible under the current continuing resolution.

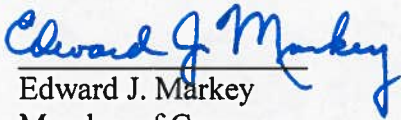
Low income families spend a higher percentage of their income on energy costs. This is especially true during times of extreme temperatures and increased energy prices. October marks the beginning of the coldest months for many families and it is not the time to hold up this needed relief.

The Department of Energy's Energy Information Administration (EIA) projects that the prices for most heating fuels will increase for consumers this winter. Average expenditures for households that use heating oil are forecast to be higher than in any previous winter. The EIA projects that average household heating expenditures for heating oil will increase by 8 percent this winter. Consumers heating with natural gas are expected to pay 3 percent more this winter and propane expenditures will increase by 7 percent. While these price increases would be challenging under the best of times, elevated levels of unemployment across our states will make this year's heating season an even greater struggle.

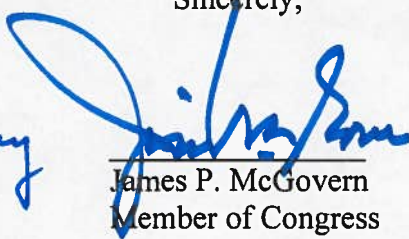
The current continuing resolution funds federal programs through November 18, 2011. While there is still uncertainty as to the final FY2012 funding levels for LIHEAP, it is critical that the states begin the process of assisting those individuals with the greatest needs. We therefore request that you immediately release as much LIHEAP funding as possible under the current continuing resolution in order to allow states and low-income households to prepare for what will be a challenging winter.

Thank you for your continued support of the LIHEAP program and for your consideration of this request.


Sincerely,



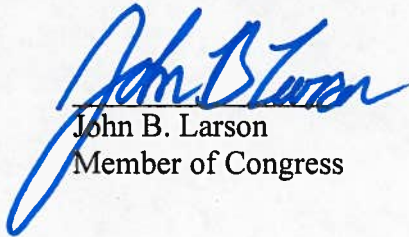
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