

Murphy Leads New England Effort to Force President to Release Emergency Home Heating Funds

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - As Connecticut residents prepare for high home heating bills this winter, Congressman Chris Murphy (CT-5) led an effort to force President Bush to release emergency funds from the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) to New England. In a letter signed by all House members from New England, Murphy and his colleagues urged the President to immediately release \$120 million in remaining contingency funds for LIHEAP to help cushion the impact of rising home heating oil costs on many of their most vulnerable constituents. Of the funds at his disposal, \$100 million will expire on September 30th unless the President acts.

"This winter, people in New England will be faced with a life or death choice when it comes to heating their homes. With home heating oil costing thousands of dollars more than last winter, we have to act fast to make sure those most in need get help. The President has the funds at his disposal to make the difference for thousands of people in New England - now is the time for him to act," said Murphy.

LIHEAP is a block grant program that assists states with low-income heating and air conditioning. LIHEAP served 86,000 Connecticut households in Fiscal Year 2007. So far this year, Connecticut has received \$41.8 million in regular funds and \$16.9 million in emergency funds, for a total of \$58.7 million.

Home heating oil in Connecticut currently hovers around an average of \$4 a gallon, an increase of over \$1.50 since this time last year. Connecticut residents are expected to pay between \$3,000 and \$5,000 for heating oil this winter.

The National Energy Assistance Director's Association (NEADA) reported earlier this summer that more than 15 million households nationwide are currently facing utility shutoffs because they simply cannot afford to pay their energy bills, an increase of nearly 15% from a year ago.

Releasing emergency LIHEAP funds this early in the heating season is not unprecedented - Connecticut received emergency funds in early September 2006, when home heating oil was just \$2.52 a gallon.

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