
EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE

Congressman George Miller, Chairman

Tuesday, November 13, 2007
Press Office, 202-226-0853

**Chairwoman McCarthy Statement at Subcommittee Hearing on
“Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program: LIHEAP
Overview and Current Issues”**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. Carolyn McCarthy (D-NY), chairwoman of the House Subcommittee on Healthy Families and Communities, for a subcommittee hearing on “Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program: LIHEAP Overview and Current Issues”*

Thank you all for coming today. We will be discussing a very serious issue facing our low income families.

With energy costs consistently on the rise, more and more families must make the tough decision whether to heat their homes, or put food on the table.

That is a decision no one should ever be forced to make.

Unfortunately, heating costs will only increase as we enter into the winter months.

Oil is trading at nearly one hundred dollars per barrel.

And the prices of other heating sources, such as natural gas, propane and electricity have all increased by record number, according to the Energy Information Administration.

These increased costs make it extremely difficult for low income families to heat their homes, placing their families and loved one in harms way.

That is why the Federal government created the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program or LIHEAP.

This great program has been helping low income families heat their homes since 1981.

Currently, over five million households receive LIHEAP assistance.

Just last week, the House passed language in the Labor –HHS Appropriations bill to provide 2.4 billion dollars for the LIHEAP program.

Unfortunately, President Bush vetoed this vital legislation just today, placing the health and well being of millions of families at risk this winter.

Studies have shown that the energy burden of low income families is much higher than wealthier families.

According to the American Gas Association and the Department of Health and Human Services, low income families spend nearly twenty percent of their income on heating and cooling costs, compared to seven percent for standard households.

It is clear our nation's low income families spend a much greater portion of their income on heating and cooling costs, and they deserve and need assistance from the Federal government.

There are things that can be done to reduce the monthly energy bills at home.

I make sure to unplug my appliances at my home in New York before I travel to Washington each week.

I also check to make sure I have not left lights on that are not being used, and turn my heat off when I am not at home.

There are many things that can be done to reduce home heating costs, and this Subcommittee is committed to improving the LIHEAP program.

But we must also work to development clean, renewable and cost efficient fuel to put an end to the energy crunch in this nation.

We will hear from a panel of experts today who will offer their views of the LIHEAP program, and provide this Subcommittee with ideas and suggestions to improve the delivery of this proven program.

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