

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 10, 2007

The Honorable Robert C. Byrd
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Byrd and Ranking Member Cochran:

Thank you for your ongoing support for the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Thanks to your and the Committee's leadership in appropriating funds, assistance has been granted to millions of households, often meaning the difference between life and death in both cold and warm weather states. We are writing to ask that any additional LIHEAP funds be distributed equally between LIHEAP's contingency fund and block grant formula.

As you know, the soaring cost of energy is a burden on low-income households throughout the country which must be addressed. Recently, your Committee has been called upon to provide additional funds for LIHEAP. On November 30, Senators Reed and Collins, joined by 19 additional Senators, wrote to the Committee to approve an additional \$1 billion in emergency funding for LIHEAP. Then on December 4, 2007, Senator Sanders, joined by 23 additional Senators, introduced the Keeping Americans Warm Act of 2007 which would provide \$1 billion in emergency funding for LIHEAP. Both of these efforts provide funding in the contingency fund rather than the block grant formula, which perpetuates LIHEAP as a regional rather than a national program.

The health and safety considerations LIHEAP is intended to address among our most susceptible populations—the elderly, the disabled, and children—are not limited to extreme cold alone. Because low-income families have energy needs year-round, it is important that any additional LIHEAP funding be distributed in a manner that ensures states throughout the country can provide assistance to those in need, particularly when extreme temperature fluctuations occur. In order to ensure that resources are distributed equitably, and that all states can offer the program's benefits to their low-income households in need, we ask that you split any additional funding equally between LIHEAP's block grant formula and the contingency fund, as was done in the supplemental funding provided in 2006. This manner of distribution will ensure that households already facing extreme cold can get the necessary assistance they need now, and that funds will also be available when extreme heat conditions occur next summer.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Dole
