MGA

Midwestern Governors Association

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The Honorable Robert Byrd
Chairman, Senate Appropriations

The Honorable David Obey
Chairman, House Appropriations

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations

The Honorable Jerry Lewis
Ranking Member, House Appropriations

Dear Chairman Byrd, Senator Cochran, Chairman Obey, and Representative Lewis,

We are writing to request that you include additional funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). LIHEAP has long been a priority for governors in the Midwestern region where citizens can face extreme temperatures in both the winter and summer months. As governors, we have worked over the years to help ensure that our most vulnerable residents are not overwhelmed by unexpected increases in home energy costs and we urge you to continue your commitment through increased funding for this program.

In FY 2007, Congress funded LIHEAP at approximately $2 billion. While this funding was appreciated, it was less than the $5.1 billion authorized for the program. States were best served by the FY 2006 allocation of $3.2 billion which allowed states to adequately address the needs of our citizens and fund state weatherization programs.

We understand the budget restraints that members of Congress must consider and that tough decisions must be made. However, cold winter temperatures are already impacting us in the Midwest. According to the Midwestern Regional Climate Center, temperatures were 5 to 10 degrees below normal during the week of Thanksgiving and we are fast approaching the winter storm season. The Energy Information Administration has estimated that American households will pay between 10 to 26 percent more for heating fuels this winter.

We believe LIHEAP should be a national priority, as it is one that especially impacts citizens in our region. We urge you to approve a substantial increase of LIHEAP funds so that states can maintain benefit levels while serving more eligible citizens. We appreciate Congress' past support for heating and cooling funds, and urge you to continue robust Congressional support of the LIHEAP program.

Sincerely,

Jim Doyle
Governor, Wisconsin
MGA Chair

M. Michael Rounds
Governor, South Dakota
MGA Vice Chair

Rod Blagojevich
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