

In the Energy Assistance Community ...

· **Updates on the National Energy and Utility Affordability Conference**

Former HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros and former Deputy Assistant Energy Secretary Karl Rábago will be among the featured speakers at the third annual National Energy and Utility Affordability Conference, June 14 at the Hyatt Regency San Antonio. Cisneros, who served as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development during the Clinton Administration, is the keynote speaker at the opening general session of the three-day conference. Cisneros is executive chairman of the CityView companies, which work with homebuilders to create homes priced within the range of average families. CityView is a partner in building 40 communities in 12 states, including more than 7,000 homes. Rábago is a former commissioner of the Texas Public Utility Commission and serves as vice president for distributed energy services with Austin Energy, the municipal electric utility for the City of Austin. He has nearly 20 years of experience in electricity policy and regulation, emerging energy markets and clean-energy technology development, and implementation of sustainability principles.

Registrations for the 2010 National Energy and Utility Affordability Conference must be postmarked by April 30 to be eligible for the “early bird” discounted attendance rates. Beginning May 1, conference fees are \$375 for nonprofit organizations; \$575 for government agencies and Tribes; and \$675 for corporations, utilities and trade associations. Unable to attend all three days of the conference? You also can pay the daily rate, which is \$160, \$225 or \$260 for the three respective attendance categories. Register online at <http://guest.cvent.com/i.aspx?5S%2cM3%2c4b85ab82-9831-48e7-b83d-b4216ccff5fb> .

The accrediting authorities for the state bars of Colorado, Louisiana and Pennsylvania are the first to approve NEUAC 2010 as a source of continuing legal education for lawyers. Colorado has approved up to 12 hours of CLE credit; Louisiana has approved 10.25 hours; and Pennsylvania has approved 7.5 hours. The totals vary because some of the workshops approved for credit take place at the same time, and attendance at concurrent sessions would not be possible. Accreditation applications are pending with the states of Florida, Minnesota, New Mexico and Texas. According to the Pennsylvania Board of Law Examiners, Pennsylvania has reciprocity with 36 states and jurisdictions: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia and Wisconsin

San Antonio, the country's seventh-largest city, features a trio of popular attractions. Two of those, the Riverwalk and the Alamo, are just outside the conference hotel's doors. The third is Market Square, which is said to be the largest Mexican-style market outside of Mexico. But there's more beyond the obvious tourist stops, and the city offers excellent Chicano art, 19th-century-style shopping, church music that goes way beyond hymns. The *New York Times* elaborates in this April 4 feature: <http://travel.nytimes.com/2010/04/04/travel/04hours.html?scp=3&sq=san%20> .

- **NEADA Releases Survey Showing How LIHEAP Helps Millions of Low Income Families**

The National Energy Assistance Directors' Association recently released its annual survey of families receiving help through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. Of special concern was whether the additional funding Congress provided for LIHEAP was making a difference in helping poor families pay their energy bills. Lawmakers doubled funding for LIHEAP from \$2.57 billion in Fiscal Year 2008 to \$5.1 billion in FY 2009 and FY 2010. During the same period, the number of households helped by the program increased by 3.1 million, and average assistance payments increased from approximately 32 percent to about 47 percent of the cost of home heating. "During the period of study, the economic recession hit with full force," NEADA said in a news release about the study. "The survey results confirmed that the increased funding allowed millions of lower income families to maintain access to affordable home energy." NEADA is a member of the NLIEC Board of Directors. Read more at: <http://www.neada.org/communications/press/2010-04-16PRESS-National.pdf>

In Washington ...

- **Senate Budget Chairman Recommends \$5.1 Billion for LIHEAP**

In his markup of the Senate Budget Resolution for Fiscal Year 2011, Senate Budget Committee Chairman Kent Conrad (D-ND) has recommended \$5.1 billion in funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. The chairman's mark – which spells out specific amounts for programs – represents a major hurdle in securing full funding for LIHEAP in the next fiscal year. While the budget proposal is not an appropriation, it does set limits on how much lawmakers can spend for given programs. "The Senate budget resolution should be viewed more as a policy statement, but as an important policy statement," said Mark Wolfe, executive director of the National Energy Assistance Directors' Association. "It is a first step in the right direction."

In the States ...

- **Colorado PUC Reaches Decision in Xcel Rate Case**

In a recent Xcel Energy rate case, the Colorado Public Utilities Commission issued a decision that benefits low-income Colorado households in two ways. First, the commission approved a request by Xcel Energy to extend its gas "Percent of Income" pilot program to electric low-income customers. In the pilot program, which began for gas customers in January 2009, around 15,000 low-income customers will be billed an amount that is 6 percent of their income for home energy (3 percent for electricity and 3 percent for natural gas). In addition, customers enrolled in the pilot will be placed on an arrearage-forgiveness program that will forgive existing arrears over a 24-month period. In the same rate case, the Colorado PUC's

order also required Xcel Energy to continue to donate 100 percent of residential late payment fees to **Energy Outreach Colorado** (a member of the NLIEC Board of Directors) to be used for bill payment assistance for the company's low-income customers. Xcel began charging its residential customers a 1 percent per month late payment fee in 2007, at which time the company was required by the commission to donate the entire amount to Energy Outreach until rates for the company's next rate case went into effect. This process was extended in the last two rate cases, and no expiration of the transfer of residential late payment fees to Energy Outreach was set in this most recent case. The amount of funding from residential late payment fees from Xcel is around \$5-\$6 million annually. — **Skip Arnold, Energy Outreach Colorado**

· **Wisconsin Lawmakers Agree to Payday Loan Regulations, Nix Renewable Energy Bill**

Wisconsin lawmakers have agreed to regulate the payday lending industry for the first time and take steps to turn around the most troubled public schools. The measures won final approval in the Assembly April 22 as lawmakers wrapped up the legislative session. Not winning approval were measures to promote the use of renewable energy, to deregulate the landline telephone industry or to overhaul Wisconsin voting laws. The regulations on stores that offer payday and auto title loans came after years of debate and intense lobbying by the industry. Wisconsin had been the only state not to regulate the industry. — *Associated Press*, April 23, 2010 Read more at: <http://www.greenbaypressgazette.com/article/20100423/GPG0101/4230583/1207/gpg0101/Wisconsin-lawmakers-agree-to-payday-loan-regulations>

In the News ...

· **Probation for Two, Jail for One in Energy Assistance Scam**

Two members of a family were sentenced to probationary terms while a third was ordered to spend a year in jail for assisting a family member who was a local administrator of the New Jersey Home Energy Assistance Program to steal from the program, Attorney General Paula T. Dow said. The administrator, Constance Campbell, 24, of Chester, PA, pleaded guilty in February to second-degree official misconduct for stealing \$24,000 from the program. An investigation by the Division of Criminal Justice Corruption Bureau revealed that Constance Campbell used her position as an HEA manager for Tri-County Community Action to process false HEA applications for herself and the five family members who were charged. — *Woodbury (NJ) Gloucester County Times*, April 9, 2010 Read more at: http://www.nj.com/gloucester-county/index.ssf/2010/04/probation_for_two_jail_for_one.html

· **Wisconsin to Increase Heating Assistance for Low Income Residents**

Governor Jim Doyle announced that the State of Wisconsin is increasing the average payment that will be made available through the Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program (WHEAP) to low-income households for the payment of heating and electric bills. The average heating payment per household will increase by about 35%, from \$389 to \$525 — based on a lower than expected caseload of 220,000 recipients. Families who have already applied for and received benefits will receive additional help in the form of a credit on their next utility bill. The actual amount of the additional benefit is dependent on family income. Governor Doyle also announced that the state will make available at least \$5 million

from Public Benefits funding to assist low-income households with the payment of their electric bills. The Department of Administration will convene a working group of stakeholders to determine how to best use the funds to help people, including direct benefits and crisis assistance. — *Gov Monitor*, April 16, 2010 Read more at:

http://www.thegovmonitor.com/world_news/united_states/wisconsin-to-increase-heating-assistance-for-low-income-residents-28191.html

Gas Shut-Off Leaves Disabled Man in Cold

Terry Koehler needs gas for his heat and hot water, but the 59-year-old South Side Chicago man doesn't have the means to pay for it. The former Illinois handyman has been on disability since 2005 with a variety of ailments, including degenerative disc disease, fibromyalgia and Reynolds syndrome, an autoimmune disease. On July 1, his doctor completed a medical hardship form, but the hardship form wasn't sent to Peoples Gas until Oct. 7. By then, the gas company considered it outdated. A customer service agent instructed Koehler to get a more recent note from his doctor. On Oct. 22, his doctor sent a new form, Koehler said. ... Koehler assumed everything was OK with his service, so he was shocked when he woke up April 7 to a cold house. Koehler said he called Peoples and was told it never received the second note from his doctor. Without the note, he was liable for his remaining balance of \$651.55.

Because he hadn't paid, his service was discontinued. — *Chicago Tribune*, April 25, 2010

Read more at: <http://www.chicagotribune.com/business/problemsolver/ct-biz-0425-problem-koehler-20100425,0,986401.column>

Connecticut Fuel Fund Receives \$1 Million From State

After a considerable delay, Connecticut's statewide fuel fund has received \$1 million in state funding for energy assistance for low-income households. Last year the state legislature approved \$5 million for Operation Fuel's 2009-2010 fiscal year, however the money was cut back and held up due to the budget deficit. The fund did receive \$750,000 from the state and had \$1 million that it had raised from private sources. However, it announced earlier this month that it was running out of money and would be unable to help residents when the state's disconnect moratorium ended April 30. Operation Fuel and its network of over 100 fuel banks will now be able to work quickly to help low-income households prevent shutoffs and work out payment plans with their utility providers, said Patricia Wrice, fund executive director, adding that 100 percent of the funds will be used to defray the energy costs of low-income households statewide. The delay in receipt of state funds hit especially hard because during the previous fiscal year, Operation Fuel was able to serve about 13,000 households with a budget of \$6 million, mostly from the state. And while Wrice recalled that last season was the most challenging winter in Operation Fuel history, the current year is nearly as difficult as Connecticut continues to face tough economic times. — LIHEAP Clearinghouse, April 27, 2010

Editorials ...

Some Warming News

Earlier this week, we brought you the story of Operation Fuel and how the energy-assistance program might have to turn away people seeking assistance for the remainder of this fiscal year. Now there's better news. Wednesday, Gov. M. Jodi Rell signed a bill giving Operation

Fuel \$1 million for energy assistance for households facing shutoff notices, according to Patricia Wrice, Operation Fuel's executive director, Because of the recession, Operation Fuel and its statewide network of more than 100 fuel banks received an unprecedented demand for energy assistance this winter so the need is urgent. ... Operation Fuel had no choice but to look to the people of Connecticut to help its neediest citizens. Fortunately, the state Legislature and the governor saw that need — and responsibility — and met it. — *New Britain (CT) Herald*, April 16, 2010 Read more at: <<http://www.newbritainherald.com/articles/2010/04/16/opinion/doc4bc91719de9ba713273450.txt>>

· **Trying to Keep the Heat on Appalachian: The State House Minority Leader is Probably Wasting His Energy**

Is Ward Armstrong running for governor? The Democratic minority leader in the Virginia House of Delegates says no, but his visit to Appalachian Power Co. offices in Roanoke last week looked an awful lot like a grab for attention beyond his district. Fortified by constituents' stories of hardship piled on hardship by soaring electric bills, Armstrong called a news conference downtown, then hand-delivered a letter asking executives not to resume disconnecting non-paying customers next month, a practice suspended during a brutal winter. At least, the delegate from Henry County implored, work with people "making a good faith effort to pay," and contact customers about setting up a payment plan if they don't have one. Check, and check. The power company says it does both. And in the end, consumers do have to pay for the power they use. ... His efforts would be better spent pushing for state energy assistance for the needy, both to help pay the bills and to lower them, with energy-conserving home improvements to cut usage. — *Roanoke (VA) Times*, April 19, 2010 Read more at:

<http://www.tradingmarkets.com/news/stock-alert/ajc_editorial-trying-to-keep-the-heat-on-appalachian-the-state-house-minority-leader-is-probably-wasti-920538.html>

Commentaries ...

· **Do the Rules of the Nation's Electric Grid Discriminate Against Wind Power?**

The future mix of electric power generation sources in the United States is critically linked to the fate of climate legislation in Congress. But changes in the way the grid works — if they occur — hinge more on what happens at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, where a set of central policy issues are on the table. — Peter Behr of *Climate Wire* in the *New York Times*, April 27, 2010 Read more at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/cwire/2010/04/27/27climatewire-do-the-rules-of-the-nations-electric-grid-di-49343.html>>

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