

# NLIEC News

August 31, 2007

## Within the Energy Assistance Community ...

### • **NFFN Adds Four New Members to Board of Directors**

The **National Fuel Funds Network** Board of Directors gained three new voting members and a new ex-officio member in the summer of 2007. NFFN members elected Kim Campbell, manager of community relations for TXU, who began service at the June 4 Board meeting. In August, the Board appointed two new voting members to fill vacancies. They are Marsha Belcher, Director of Marketing, Community Economic Development Association in Chicago and Eva Pratt, Director of Finance and Personnel, Capital Area Legal Services Corporation of Baton Rouge. In addition, David Fox, executive director of the **National Low Income Energy Consortium**, joins the Board as an ex-officio member. NFFN officers for 2007-2008 are Greg Sawyers of Citizens Gas (Indianapolis, chairperson; Jim Jacob of **New Jersey SHARES**, vice chairperson; Nancy Udy, The Salvation Army – Golden State Division, secretary; Janis Foreman, **Sacramento Municipal Utilities District**, treasurer, and Executive Committee members Sue Montgomery Corey of the Community Power Network of New York State, and Kansas City Councilwoman Jan Marcason.

### • **NFFN Launches New Website**

The **National Fuel Funds Network** has completely redesigned its website. The site provides a wide range of useful and accessible information on energy assistance, comments by the organization's leaders and details on such events as the National Energy and Utility Affordability Conference next year in Denver, co-presented with the National Low Income Energy Consortium, its Washington Action Day for LIHEAP and the Victorine Q. Adams Institute, the first ever national gathering solely on charitable energy assistance fundraising. The site can be found at [www.nationalfuelfunds.org](http://www.nationalfuelfunds.org) <<http://www.nationalfuelfunds.org>> .

### • **FPL Starts Online Store**

They're already the country's largest producer of wind energy, operate two of the world's solar-energy fields and are ranked by the U.S. Dept. of Energy as the utility with the most energy conservation programs. Now, Florida's biggest electric company **Florida Power & Light** is extending its push for renewable energy and conservation to Internet shoppers. On Thursday, it launched an on-line store that offers energy-efficient products such as compact fluorescent light bulbs, low flow shower-heads and air conditioner filters. — **Orlando (FL) Sun-Sentinel, August 9, 2007**

Read more at:

<http://www.sun-sentinel.com/business/sfl-0810fpl,0,1535864.story> <<http://www.sun-sentinel.com/business/sfl-0810fpl,0,1535864.story>>

## In Washington ...

### • **HHS Sending LIHEAP Contingency Funds to 12 States**

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services says 12 states that have experienced unusually hotter than normal conditions in recent weeks will be given \$50 million in emergency assistance from the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. "Severe heat can be devastating, especially for our children, older Americans and people with disabilities," HHS Secretary Mike Leavitt said. "This emergency aid will help states that have recently experienced unusually high temperatures and need additional resources to support low-income families through the rest of the summer." The \$50 million is allocated to states most affected by the heat, based on the number of low-income households in the state. The 12 states and the amounts they received are: **Alabama, \$4,523,491; Arkansas, \$2,256,931; Georgia, \$6,444,253; Kansas, \$2,148,099; Kentucky, \$3,872,747; Louisiana, \$4,422,321; Mississippi, \$2,712,464; Missouri, \$4,945,219; North Carolina, \$6,986,902; Oklahoma, \$3,028,964; South Carolina, \$3,593,166; and Tennessee, \$5,065,443.** — **HHS news release, August 29, 2007**

### • **Census Bureau: Poverty Rate Falls, but More Are Uninsured**

The nation's poverty rate fell in 2006 for the first time this decade, the Census Bureau reported today, even as the percentage of Americans without health insurance coverage hit a record high. The results were not consistent across racial or age groups. For Hispanics, the poverty rate fell by 1.2 percentage points to 20.6 percent, while for whites, blacks and Asians, it remained statistically unchanged. For elderly people, the poverty rate was among the lowest since 1959, when the government began collecting such data. — **New York Times, August 28, 2007**

Read more (free subscription required) at:

[http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/28/us/28cnd-census.html?\\_r=1&hp&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/28/us/28cnd-census.html?_r=1&hp&oref=slogin) <[http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/28/us/28cnd-census.html?\\_r=1&hp&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/28/us/28cnd-census.html?_r=1&hp&oref=slogin)>

## In the News ...

### • **Shocking Electricity Prices Follow Deregulation**

When Deborah Jackson opened her electric bill in February, she had no idea it would be a life-changing event. She and her husband, Patrick, who live in a three-bedroom brick house in East St. Louis, Ill., owed Ameren \$600.82, up from \$172 in January. In March, the tab floated into the stratosphere: \$1,024.31. Since the couple's budget billing plan lets them pay the same amount each month, the charges

were eventually set at \$538. ... The Jacksons are among millions of U.S. residents reeling from the aftershocks of electricity deregulation in 17 states and Washington, D.C. — **USA Today, August 9, 2007**

Read more at:

[http://www.usatoday.com:80/money/industries/energy/2007-08-09-power-prices\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com:80/money/industries/energy/2007-08-09-power-prices_N.htm) <[http://www.usatoday.com/money/industries/energy/2007-08-09-power-prices\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/money/industries/energy/2007-08-09-power-prices_N.htm)>

· **A/C Use Up, Heat Deaths Down in South**

Hot, sticky summers have always defined living in the South, but experts believe that injuries and deaths caused by extreme temperatures have been drastically reduced by the wider availability of air conditioning. About 91 percent, or 36 million, of Southern households now have central air conditioning units, a number that has grown considerably since the late 1970s, when about a quarter of Southerners didn't have air conditioners, according to the U.S. Census figures from 2005. Another 5.7 million have window-mounted units. — **Associated Press, August 10, 2007**

Read more at:

<http://www.forbes.com/feeds/ap/2007/08/10/ap4008307.html> <<http://www.forbes.com/feeds/ap/2007/08/10/ap4008307.html>>

· **Residents Fight High Utility Costs to Stay Cool**

Summers are hot here, but lately air conditioning units have been working overtime to combat an oppressive August. The forecast for the next few days is expected to teeter in the mid-90s, but feel more like 110, with utility bills rising as residents try to keep it cool. ... While August bills are expected to peak as customers crank up their air conditioning, they still can keep their costs down, local providers advise. There's also help out there for those who may have a hard time paying the bill. — *Lafayette (LA) Daily Advertiser*, August 11, 2007

Read more at:

<http://www.theadvertiser.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070811/NEWS01/708110328/1002> <<http://www.theadvertiser.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070811/NEWS01/708110328/1002>>

· **Heat Kills at Least 37 People in South, Midwest**

Unrelenting heat that has baked the Midwest and South for the past 10 days has killed more than three dozen people, authorities said as they reminded people to stay cool and drink plenty of water. In Tennessee, the Shelby County medical examiner's office confirmed Thursday that heat caused the death of a 53-year-old man found in his apartment the day before, bringing the death toll in Memphis alone to eight. In all, 37 deaths in the South and Midwest have been confirmed as heat-related, and heat is suspected in 10 more, authorities said. — *Associated Press*, August 16, 2007

Read more at:

[http://www.usatoday.com/weather/news/2007-08-16-heat-fatalities\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/weather/news/2007-08-16-heat-fatalities_N.htm) <[http://www.usatoday.com/weather/news/2007-08-16-heat-fatalities\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/weather/news/2007-08-16-heat-fatalities_N.htm)>

· **High Electric Bills Building III Will for Nevada Power**

Carrying placards that stated, "Never have so many owed so much to so few," more than two dozen members of a national community action organization protested what one member termed "unbelievably high" power bills during a demonstration at the West Sahara Avenue headquarters of Nevada Power Co. recently. — *Las Vegas (NV) Business Press*, August 17, 2007

Read more at:

[http://www.lvbusinesspress.com/articles/2007/08/17/news/iq\\_16088996.txt](http://www.lvbusinesspress.com/articles/2007/08/17/news/iq_16088996.txt) <[http://www.lvbusinesspress.com/articles/2007/08/17/news/iq\\_16088996.txt](http://www.lvbusinesspress.com/articles/2007/08/17/news/iq_16088996.txt)>

· **Help Available for Those Needing Air Conditioning**

One elderly woman's medicine melted in her house, which had no air conditioning. Another who has asthma could not sleep at night because her house was so hot. They are just two of the Putnam County residents suffering from the effects of the continuing heat wave, and now the Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency is working to help everyone who needs help to make it through this severe weather. — *Cookville (TN) Herald-Citizen*, August 25, 2007

Read more at:

[http://www.herald-citizen.com/NF/omf.wnm/herald/news\\_story.html?rkey=0045881+cr=gdn](http://www.herald-citizen.com/NF/omf.wnm/herald/news_story.html?rkey=0045881+cr=gdn) <[http://www.herald-citizen.com/NF/omf.wnm/herald/news\\_story.html?rkey=0045881+cr=gdn](http://www.herald-citizen.com/NF/omf.wnm/herald/news_story.html?rkey=0045881+cr=gdn)>

· **Arizona Poor Get Least Energy Aid**

Nearly a quarter of the year, the mercury in Arizona hits 100 or higher. But those scorching days do little to qualify the state for federal funding marked to help low-income residents afford to keep their homes cool during the summer. Arizona received the least amount of funding per low-income person in the nation through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program in 2006, according to Cynthia Zwick, director of the Community Action Association. The program's funding is funneled to cities, agencies and counties by the Arizona Department of Economic Security. This means the state could only serve about 4 percent of families who qualified for help in 2005, Zwick said. — *Phoenix (AZ) Arizona Republic*, August 28, 2007

Read more at:

<http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/local/articles/0828liheap0828.html> <<http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/local/articles/0828liheap0828.html>>

· **Hearing to Probe Heating Assistance Program**

Thousands of Pennsylvanians are receiving invitations this week to participate in a program to help them pay their winter heating bills, but the agency sending the invitation may need some help of its own. This morning, allegations of fraud within the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) will be the subject of a hearing at La Roche College by the Republican Policy Committee, comprising GOP state representatives. The hearing comes in response to a report issued in June by Auditor General Jack Wagner that found "serious deficiencies" in the state Department of Public Welfare's administration of the program, which uses federal funds to provide grants to low-income households. — *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, August 29, 2007

Read more at: <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/07241/812858-28.stm> <<http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/07241/812858-28.stm>>

· **Alternative Way to Pay Utility Bills Draws Fire**

Retired high-school math teacher Cynthia Elgar often pays her bills online, but when she got a disconnection notice from her Phoenix electric utility, Arizona Public Service, she realized a payment had gone awry somehow. In the past, she would have scooted over to a nearby utility office to make the late payment. But the utility has shut down most of its neighborhood offices and relies on a network of retail stores and check-cashing facilities to receive in-person payments. APS directed Ms. Elgar to a Cash & More storefront in Phoenix. There, she waited along with fellow customers engaged in transactions such as cashing checks and getting short-term, high-interest "payday loans" – a business that consumer advocates say often preys on low-income people in dire financial straits. — *Wall Street Journal*, August 30, 2007

Read more at:

<http://online.wsj.com:80/article/SB118843583747413029.html> <<http://online.wsj.com:80/article/SB118843583747413029.html>>

## Editorials ...

· **Energy Assistance Program — A Little Chillier**

The federal government finds the funds to finance hundreds of programs — some good, some questionable, some controversial. On the good side, this year in Kansas the government has responded generously and expeditiously with everything from bottled water to mobile homes to loans for homeowners and businesses in Greensburg, which was leveled by an F5 tornado on May 4, and in dozens of eastern Kansas communities ravaged by floodwaters in late June. But another program with ties to the state falls into the questionable category — not because of unwise federal expenditures but because it is being put on hold until 2008. — *Topeka (KS) Capital-Journal*, August 10, 2007

Read more at:

[http://cjonline.com/stories/081007/opi\\_190210587.shtml](http://cjonline.com/stories/081007/opi_190210587.shtml) <[http://cjonline.com/stories/081007/opi\\_190210587.shtml](http://cjonline.com/stories/081007/opi_190210587.shtml)>

· **Energy Assistance is Valuable**

With the heat index reaching triple digits on several occasions, few would argue this summer has been among the hottest. According to the National Weather Service, there is a 55 percent chance of higher-than-average temperatures from now through September. And with higher temperatures comes higher electric bills. It's unfortunate that some find themselves having to decide between paying a bill or buying food for their family. That's why the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program is such a valuable resource. — *Campbellsville (KY) Central Kentucky News-Journal*, August 23, 2007

Read more at:

<http://www.cknj.com/articles/2007/08/23/opinion/01editorial.txt> <<http://www.cknj.com/articles/2007/08/23/opinion/01editorial.txt>>

· **Do Not Allow Fraud to Burn Up Heating Aid Fund**

Although summer doesn't invite the subject, but Pennsylvania's Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program makes the difference for thousands of needy Pennsylvanians who struggle to meet their winter heating bills. A performance audit of the program by the state auditor general's office calls for aggressive action to ensure that all of the money goes to those whom the program is designed to help. ... LIHEAP is not only crucial to its beneficiaries, but often targeted for reductions at the federal level. Ensuring that the program's money is spent as intended, therefore, is important not only to the people who need assistance, but to the survival of the program itself. — *Towanda (PA) Daily and Sunday Review*, August 27, 2007

Read more at:

[http://www.thedailyreview.com/site/news.cfm?BRD=2276&dept\\_id=465724&newsid=18752166&PAG=461&rfi=9](http://www.thedailyreview.com/site/news.cfm?BRD=2276&dept_id=465724&newsid=18752166&PAG=461&rfi=9) <[http://www.thedailyreview.com/site/news.cfm?BRD=2276&dept\\_id=465724&newsid=18752166&PAG=461&rfi=9](http://www.thedailyreview.com/site/news.cfm?BRD=2276&dept_id=465724&newsid=18752166&PAG=461&rfi=9)>

· **Now is Time to Think About Heating Costs**

The Farmer's Almanac -- not to be confused with the Old Farmer's Almanac -- is available today. Since 1818, the almanac has covered everything from gardening tips to predicting the weather. It has had uncanny precision in predicting the weather. So, when the Farmer's Almanac says it will be a cold and snowy winter, which it is predicting for the East Coast, we have good reason to believe it. Either way, now really is the time to start thinking about getting your family and home ready for winter. — *Norwich (CT) Bulletin*, August 28, 2007

Read more at:

<http://www.norwichbulletin.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070828/OPINION01/708280331/1014/OPINION> <<http://www.norwichbulletin.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070828/OPINION01/708280331/1014/OPINION>>

## Opinions/Commentary ...

· **On Poverty, Maybe We're All Wrong**

Most years, what passes for the national debate about poverty is confined to the 24 hours after the government releases its annual report on household incomes, as it did yesterday. The left expresses moral outrage -- in the richest country the world has ever known, one in every eight residents still lives in poverty -- and calls for government to do something about it. The right, to the degree that it pays any attention to the issue at all, notes that while the poverty rate goes up and down with the economic cycle, it has remained relatively stable over the past 35 years and, in any case, represents a failure of government meddling, not a mandate for more of it. — Business columnist Steven Pearlstein in *Washington Post*, August 29, 2007

Read more at:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/08/28/AR2007082801669.html?hpid=news-col-blog> <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/08/28/AR2007082801669.html?hpid=news-col-blog>>

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