

Within the Energy Assistance Community

- **Virginia Bar Approves CLE Credits for 2007 Conference at Nashville**

The Virginia Mandatory Continuing Legal Education Board has approved the National Low Income Energy Consortium's application to permit Virginia attorneys to receive seven hours of CLE credit (including zero hours for ethics) for their attendance or teaching at the 2007 National Low Income Energy Conference held June 5-7, 2007, in Nashville, Tennessee. Virginia attorneys have until October 31, 2007, to apply for the credit hours. Course attendance lists are not processed as certification for attendance or teaching. Therefore, any Virginia attorneys seeking the credit must apply individually using MCLE certification forms. The following workshops were approved for credit by the Commonwealth of Virginia: 4A – Legal Aid to the Rescue! Assistance for Low Income Households; 4E – The Value of Abolishing Poverty: \$20,000 per American Household; 5A – Rural Poverty Issues (cancelled; credit not available despite having been approved); 5B – Energy Act of 2005: An Update; 5D – Got a Quarter for the Meter? The Impact of Pre-pay, Time of Use & Other Technologies; and 7D – And the Hits Just Keep on Coming! Update on the Status of Deregulated States. Certification forms for submission to the MCLE can be obtained from NLIEC. Simply send an e-mail request to dfox@nliec.org <<mailto:dfox@nliec.org>> specifying whether you need the attendance form, the teaching form or both, and the appropriate forms will be forwarded to you.

- **2008 National Energy and Utility Affordability Conference**

The National Low Income Energy Consortium and National Fuel Funds Network have restructured their longstanding annual conferences to offer one combined program next June: the 2008 National Energy and Utility Affordability Conference. The two organizations will be holding one three-day conference from Monday through Wednesday, June 16-18, at the Adam's Mark Hotel in Denver. Registration will open in early 2008. Conference planning began on September 12 in Denver with a brainstorming session of NFFN and NLIEC Board members and Colorado participants to suggest possible speakers, workshops and hot topics for the conference.

- **State Energy Officials Project Record High Prices for Heating Oil, Propane and Electricity this Winter**

The state low income energy directors have released their winter home heating price projections. As shown in the table below, prices are projected to increase by 10.5 percent for all families and reach record levels for home heating oil, propane and electricity this winter. Prices for home heating oil, in particular, are projected to be almost 28 percent higher than last year's level. The average family is projected to pay about \$402 more for home heating oil than last year for a total of \$1,834. "These record prices will place a significant burden on low and moderate income families this winter," said Mark Wolfe, executive director of the National Energy Assistance Directors' Association. "We are facing that are at record levels and are calling on the Administration to immediately exercise his emergency authority under the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Act to help poor families pay for their first tank of fuel as well as cover outstanding arrearages from high cooling costs this summer."

Home Heating Costs - U.S. Average						
Average 00-05 \$ Change						
	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	(07-08)-(06-07)	% Change	
Heating Oil						
Retail Price	\$1.48	\$2.45	\$2.42	\$3.10	\$0.68	28.0%
Consumption (gallons)	632	585	592	592	0	0.0%
Expenditures	\$935	\$1,431	\$1,433	\$1,834	\$401.14	28.0%
Natural Gas						
Retail Price (\$/mcf)	\$9.28	\$14.66	\$12.42	\$13.17	\$0.75	6.0%
Consumption (mcf)	69	65	67	67	0	0.0%
Expenditures (\$)	\$641	\$946	\$831	\$881	\$49.85	6.0%
Propane						
Retail Price	\$1.40	\$1.95	\$1.98	\$2.54	\$0.56	28.3%
Consumption (gallons)	692	657	682	682	0	0.0%
Expenditures	\$967	\$1,281	\$1,348	\$1,732	\$382	28.3%
Electricity						
Price (\$/kwh)	\$0.083	\$0.096	\$0.100	\$0.107	\$0.007	7.0%
Consumption (kwh)	8,371	8,103	8,255	8,255	0	0.0%
Expenditures	\$698	\$782	\$826	\$883	\$58	7.0%
All Households						
Average Expenditures	\$697	\$948	\$898	\$992	\$94	10.5%

Price projections based on current market price and trends; prior prices are based on published reports in Short-Term Energy Outlook published by the Energy Information Administration. Low income households pay a higher share of their income for home energy than other families. In FY 2005, the mean energy burden for low income households was 14.6 percent as compared to only 3.2 percent for

non-low-income households. For LIHEAP households, the burden was even greater — 20.2 percent. These families have to choose between paying their bill and other vital necessities. The release of the remaining contingency funds will help these families avoid having to make these tough choices as the winter heating season approaches.

- **Expanded NLIIEC News Distribution List**

If you are receiving the NLIIEC News for the first time, it's because we have updated our newsletter distribution list to include attendees from the 2007 National Low Income Energy Conference, held June 4-7, 2007, in Nashville Tennessee. We now have more than 900 recipients of the NLIIEC News. If you do not wish to continue to receive the newsletter, send an e-mail with the word "unsubscribe" in the subject line to dfox@nliec.org <<mailto:dfox@nliec.org>> ; we will remove you from the distribution list.

In Washington ...

- **HHS Releases \$131 million in LIHEAP Contingency Funds**

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has announced the release of \$131 million in Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program contingency funds to help eligible low-income homeowners and renters meet home energy costs. The money is expected to provide states with heating assistance for the fall and winter months ahead. "No one should suffer from the cold," HHS Secretary Mike Leavitt said. "These funds will put states in a better position to help those in need keep their homes warm when cold weather strikes." Of the \$131 million, \$106 million will go to help individuals heat or cool their homes in all 50 states. Seven states — Alaska, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont — will share an additional \$25 million in assistance to help a large number of eligible households that use oil to heat their homes. The funds released on September 26 represent the bulk of the \$151.5 million in contingency funds available for release in Fiscal Year 2007. The remaining \$20.5 million in contingency funds will remain available for release in FY 2008. — HHS news release, September 26, 2007

Read more at:

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/news/press/2007/liheap_energy_assistance.html <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/news/press/2007/liheap_energy_assistance.html>

A list showing the state-by-state allocation of the \$131 million in contingency funds can be found at:

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/news/press/2007/liheap_fund_092007.html <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/news/press/2007/liheap_fund_092007.html>

In the States ...

- **New Mexico PRC Orders Reduction in Late Fees**

The New Mexico Public Regulatory Commission (PRC) has ordered Public Service Company of New Mexico to cut its residential late fee by more than half. Rejecting the company's claim that it needed to set a late charge that was "competitive" with credit card interest rates, the PRC directed the utility to reduce its late charge from 18 percent per year to 8 percent a year. The PRC also exempted customers from being charged a late fee if they meet the qualifications for LIHEAP, or if they are current on a deferred payment plan, or if they are not subject to collections for regulatory reasons (e.g., protected by a medical certificate). The challenge to the New Mexico utility's late payment charge was brought by Community Action of New Mexico, the state association of community action agencies. A copy of CANM's brief and testimony can be obtained at the CANM web site: www.communityactionnewmexico.org <<http://www.communityactionnewmexico.org>> under "documents."

- **Illinois Settlement Provides Relief to Low-Income**

After months of contention, a \$1 billion rate relief package for electric customers of Ameren Illinois and Commonwealth Edison was signed in to law by Governor Rod Blagojevich on August 28. The package includes programs for the low-income customers of both utilities, including summer cooling assistance, rate relief and weatherization. ComEd customers have already benefited from a low-income summer assistance program that provides a one-time credit of \$30. Customers with incomes up to 200 percent of federal poverty guidelines that experienced rate increases of 30 percent or more are eligible for a one-time credit of up to \$240. LIHEAP-recipient households automatically qualify; other households can apply through community action agencies. The utility will spend over \$15 million on these programs over the next three years. ComEd will also spend about \$11 million for a residential hardship program that provides grants up to \$1,000 to address special circumstances and hardships for households with incomes up to 400 percent of FPG. Also available is expanded weatherization assistance for low-income, electric space-heat customers that have been approved through LIHEAP agencies. — LIHEAP Clearinghouse, September 7, 2007

Read more at:

<http://www.liheap.ncat.org/news/sept07/IL.htm> <<http://www.liheap.ncat.org/news/sept07/IL.htm>>

- **California PUC Approves \$323 Million Rewards Plan**

The state's Public Utilities Commission has approved a plan that will reward or penalize utilities such as PG&E for the effectiveness

of their energy-efficiency programs. California's four large investor-owned utilities could earn up to \$323 million over three years for persuading their customers to cut energy use. If they fail, they could pay as much as \$500 million in penalties. Energy efficiency is seen a key component in meeting the state's aggressive targets for reducing greenhouse-gas emissions. — San Jose (CA) Mercury News, September 21, 2007

Read more at:

http://www.mercurynews.com/search/ci_6957481?IADID=Search-www.mercurynews.com-www.mercurynews.com&IADID=Search-www.mercurynews.com-www.mercurynews.com&nclick_check=1 <http://www.mercurynews.com/search/ci_6957481?IADID=Search-www.mercurynews.com-www.mercurynews.com&IADID=Search-www.mercurynews.com-www.mercurynews.com&nclick_check=1>

In the News ...

- **A New Push to Regulate Power Costs**

More than a decade after the drive began to convert electricity from a regulated industry into a competitive one, many states are rolling back their initiatives or returning money to individuals and businesses. A \$1 billion rebate for Illinois residents and businesses, for example, was signed into law last week. In Ohio, politicians, utilities, their customers and consumer groups are negotiating how to end competitive electricity pricing, while Virginia has repealed its law. Of the 25 states, and the District of Columbia, that had adopted competition, only one, California, is even talking about expanding market pricing. — New York Times, September 4, 2007

Read more (free subscription required) at:

http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/04/business/04energy.html?_r=1&oref=slogin <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/04/business/04energy.html?_r=1&oref=slogin>

- **Climate Action Gets Energized**

Adding an energy surcharge to utility bills and requiring cleaner cars in the state were among a list of recommendations offered Wednesday by a special committee seeking to cut Colorado's greenhouse gas emissions. The Climate Action Panel comprises 34 representatives from government, industry and environmental organizations. It wrapped up 10 months of deliberations with a packet of dozens of proposals aimed at curbing the state's impact on climate change. Overall, the panel recommended a 20 percent reduction in emissions from 2005 levels by 2020 and an 80 percent cut by 2050. The energy surcharge – one of several recommendations aimed at improving energy efficiency and reducing usage – would add about \$10 annually to individual utility bills to generate an estimated \$48 million. The money would be used for programs such as weatherization projects for low-income families and rebates for using renewable energy. — Denver Post, September 13, 2007

Read more at:

http://www.denverpost.com/headlines/ci_6876281 <http://www.denverpost.com/headlines/ci_6876281>

- **Governors Ask Bush For Heating Help**

Vermont Governor Jim Douglas has joined with other governors in New England in asking President Bush for more money to help low-income families heat their homes. In its letter to President Bush the Coalition of Northeastern Governors asks for \$151.5 million in Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, or LIHEAP, contingency money. Each state has already received a block grant to fund LIHEAP, with Vermont getting \$11.6 million, but the state says that's not enough. "We still need as much as the congress has made available, released by the administration," says Douglas. The problem, says the governor, is that federal funding has remained at the same level while home heating costs have risen 56 percent in recent years. The national average jumped from \$550 in the winter of 2001-2002 to a projected \$862 this coming winter. In Vermont that projected cost is more than \$1,800. — WCAX-TV, Burlington, VT, September 14, 2007

Read more at:

<http://www.wcax.com/Global/story.asp?S=7077592&nav=4QcS> <<http://www.wcax.com/Global/story.asp?S=7077592&nav=4QcS>>

- **State Approves Energy Assistance Program**

The Kentucky Public Service Commission has approved a five-year Home Energy Assistance program that provides utility-bill help for low-income customers of Louisville Gas & Electric Co. and Kentucky Utilities Co. A similar pilot program, approved in 2004, was set to expire this year. In an order filed Friday, the commission said the program "appears to operate efficiently," but said it was "disappointed" that the companies refused to contribute financially toward the assistance plan. That decision, it said, "is inconsistent with good corporate and community citizenship." — Louisville (KY) Courier-Journal, September 17, 2007

Read more at:

<http://www.courier-journal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070917/BUSINESS/70917012/1003> <<http://www.courier-journal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070917/BUSINESS/70917012/1003>>

apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070917/BUSINESS/70917012/1003>

- **Eleven Percent Drop in December Gas Bills, Xcel Says**

Colorado consumers will see an estimated 11 percent decline in their natural gas bills in December, compared with December 2006, Xcel Energy said Monday. But an advocate for the state's 100,000 low-income households forecasts a tough winter based on combined heating-electric bills for the entire winter. Xcel, the state's largest utility with 1.2 million natural gas customers, based its projections on December, one of the highest use months. The utility also filed a monthly natural gas cost adjustment that is 10 percent lower for October than for the same month in 2006. — Denver (CO) Rocky Mountain News, September 18, 2007

Read more at:

http://www.rockymountainnews.com/drmn/energy/article/0,2777,DRMN_23914_5700612,00.html <http://www.rockymountainnews.com/drmn/energy/article/0,2777,DRMN_23914_5700612,00.html>

- **Energy Assistance Money Misappropriated, More Grants Employees Fired**

A three-month criminal and internal probe of misconduct in the St. Clair County, Illinois, energy grants division has claimed the jobs of another five employees and the suspension of a sixth, the county intergovernmental grants department chief said Wednesday. The firings bring to seven the number of department workers who've lost their jobs since June as a result of the probe, which centers on the state-funded Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. This program provides one-time grants to qualified people who need help to pay their electric and natural gas bills. About \$20,000 was misappropriated, either in the form of grants to people who "either shouldn't have received them at all, or received a benefit in excess of what they should have received," State's Attorney Robert Haida said. — Belleville (IL) News-Democrat, September 20, 2007

Read more at:

<http://www.bnd.com/news/local/story/132869.html> <<http://www.bnd.com/news/local/story/132869.html>>

- **KeySpan Debuts Plan for Energy Efficiency**

National Grid, formerly KeySpan, assured customers it wasn't going anywhere as it unveiled a line of energy-efficiency programs for both residential and commercial customers. The company is devoting \$30 million to various incentive programs to outfit customers with more efficient home climate control systems. These include rebates for the installation of new high-efficiency heaters and water heaters, 20 percent rebates for insulation and weatherization measures, customer incentives on boiler reset controls and rebates for Energy Star window installation. — Bayside (NY) TimesLedger, September 20, 2007

Read more at:

http://www.timesledger.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=18837102&BRD=2676&PAG=461&dept_id=551069&rfi=6 <http://www.timesledger.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=18837102&BRD=2676&PAG=461&dept_id=551069&rfi=6>

- **Survey: Many Officials are Foreseeing Re-Regulation**

Support for electric deregulation has dramatically fallen among the nation's utility regulators, with one-third in deregulated states expressing the likelihood of some sort of re-regulation, according to a new survey. Conducted in conjunction with Standard & Poor's, the telephone survey of 96 state utility regulators also showed a plurality answering "none" when asked which states operate the most successful deregulated market. A majority either answered "none" or "don't know" to the same question. The survey was based on half-hour telephone interviews with regulators in 51 jurisdictions – including Texas – and led by the Connecticut-based consulting firm RKS Research. — Fort Worth (TX) Star-Telegram, September 21, 2007

Read more at:

<http://www.star-telegram.com/business/story/242476.html> <<http://www.star-telegram.com/business/story/242476.html>>

- **Arkansas Utility Regulators Approve Programs**

The Arkansas Public Service Commission has approved four programs aimed at promoting energy efficiency and conservation within the state. Three of the plans involved joint proposals of Arkansas electric and gas utilities. Those programs include an education program through the Arkansas Energy Office and two weatherization programs to provide residential, commercial and industrial customers with energy audits. The commission also approved efficiency programs for Entergy Arkansas and Arkansas Western Gas Co. A fifth program on statewide energy efficiency education must be resubmitted to the commission. — Springdale (AR) Morning News, September 21, 2007

- **ComEd Resumes Disconnections for Nonpayment**

Since the end of 2006, Huntley, Illinois, residents who failed to pay their electricity bills were given a break, but this month Commonwealth Edison resumed disconnections for non-payment. Officials for ComEd, which serves as the electric service provider for Huntley, said the company started disconnections again because residents who don't pay their bills were making rates go up for all ComEd customers. "We have to be responsible and take action for those customers who don't pay," said Judy Rader, spokeswoman for

ComEd. "It generates bad debt cost and those costs get spread to all the customers." — GateHouse News Service, September 24, 2007

Read more at:

<http://www.chicagosuburbannews.com/huntley/homepage/x428365974> <<http://www.chicagosuburbannews.com/huntley/homepage/x428365974>>

- **Higher Utility Bills Face Homeowners**

Despite the pleasant early autumn weather warming much of the country, sky-high heating costs are in store this winter and many of the nation's households are in the grips of a home energy crisis, says a coalition of state officials, the AARP, and the nation's natural gas utilities. The group is calling on the Bush administration to release \$151.5 million in federal emergency assistance funds to help poor households. Most of the funds in this contingency pot will disappear, under the program enacted by Congress, if they are not released by September 30. Some 1.2 million U.S. households were disconnected from electric and natural gas service this summer due to failure to pay utility bills, says the National Energy Assistance Directors' Association. The average delinquent family's unpaid bill is \$850, a sum that typically must be paid before it can be reconnected for the winter." — U.S. News & World Report, September 25, 2007

Read more at:

<http://www.usnews.com/articles/business/your-money/2007/09/25/higher-utility-bills-face-homeowners.html> <<http://www.usnews.com/articles/business/your-money/2007/09/25/higher-utility-bills-face-homeowners.html>>

- **Heating Costs are Chilling**

The projected costs of home heating for this winter are likely to have a chilling effect on most homeowners. Record heating costs are expected nationwide this year, with the average household likely to see a 10.5 percent increase while heating oil and propane users could see a jump of 28 percent, according to the National Energy Assistance Director's Association. "These record prices will place a significant burden on low- and moderate-income families this winter," said Association Director Mark Wolfe. — Waukegan (IL) Lake County News-Sun, September 28, 2007

Read more at:

http://www.suburbanchicagonews.com/newssun/news/578773,5_1_WA28_HEATINGCOSTS_S1.article <http://www.suburbanchicagonews.com/newssun/news/578773,5_1_WA28_HEATINGCOSTS_S1.article>

Editorials ...

- **Heating Money**

Just a year after the state first began getting a discount for the millions of gallons of heating oil it obtains for the state's low-income residents, the Maine State Housing Authority and the Maine Oil Dealer's Association again disagree on what that discount should be. If the rancor over discounts continues, a reasonable alternative would be for the state to solicit bids from companies to deliver oil to low-income residents on a regional basis. — Bangor (ME) Daily News and Portland (ME) Press Herald, September 11-12, 2007

Read more at:

<http://bangornews.com/news/t/viewpoints.aspx?articleid=154091&zoid=34> <<http://bangornews.com/news/t/viewpoints.aspx?articleid=154091&zoid=34>>

<http://pressherald.maintoday.com/story.php?id=133488&ac=PHedi> <<http://pressherald.maintoday.com/story.php?id=133488&ac=PHedi>>

- **Those Dueling Energy Plans**

Pennsylvania Rep. Stan Saylor's general disdain for any policy emerging from the administration of Gov. Ed Rendell is well-known: If it has Rendell's approval, Saylor's against it. Now Saylor, R-Red Lion, chairman of the House Republican Energy Task Force, says at the beginning of a special fall session of the Legislature to deal with the governor's proposal for alternative energy projects across the state, that Rendell "knows his plan is dead" and should instead be looking at the Republican Energy Task Force alternative. There's bipartisanship at its finest. — York (PA) Dispatch, September 18, 2007

Read more at:

http://www.yorkdispatch.com/viewpoints/editorial/ci_6927228 <http://www.yorkdispatch.com/viewpoints/editorial/ci_6927228>

- **Stretching Heating Funds Will Keep More Families Warm**

More than 50,000 families in Maine need help heating their homes every winter. With high fuel costs, too many people are left to make impossible choices between staying warm, buying medicine or going hungry. Every cold day becomes a struggle, and there just aren't enough resources to meet all the needs. The ever-increasing price of heating oil only makes matters worse. That's why this year MaineHousing updated the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) so that more resources will be available to help families stay warm. — Dale McCormick in Bangor (ME) Daily News, September 13, 2007

Read more at:

<http://bangordailynews.com/news/t/viewpoints.aspx?articleid=154175&zoneid=35> <<http://bangordailynews.com/news/t/viewpoints.aspx?articleid=154175&zoneid=35>>

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