

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 17, 2011

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-221 United States Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-230 United States Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid and Minority Leader McConnell,

We write to request that you work with us to address a critical situation regarding heating and cooling assistance, and to schedule floor time to allow the Senate to enact legislation that would avoid massive cuts to the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) this winter.

We recognize that our country must take aggressive steps to reduce the federal deficit. At the same time we strongly believe that this effort should not affect home energy assistance for low income households, especially given that home heating oil prices are at record prices for this time of year. Regrettably, the Fiscal Year 2012 Final Consolidated Appropriations Bill includes a \$1.2 billion cut to LIHEAP, compared to the overall cut across all discretionary funding of \$7 billion below last year's levels. This disproportionate cut to LIHEAP represents a 25 percent reduction in funding for the main federal program that assists low-income households with their energy bills. At a time when some households are facing heating bills of over \$2,900 just to stay warm this winter, we strongly believe that this cut to LIHEAP puts too high of the burden of deficit reduction on those most vulnerable in our country.

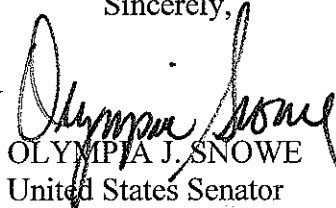
We have introduced legislation to retain funding for the LIHEAP program at last year's level. Specifically, the LIHEAP Protection Act (S.1961) would provide \$4.7 billion in funding for the program. While the purchasing power of the program has declined, due in part to the rise in energy prices, this amount would be critical in avoiding dangerous situations and impossible choices in thousands of households across the country. It is our intention that this legislation would be fully consistent with the Budget Control Act of 2011.

We would ask that you work with us to address this situation and schedule floor time when Congress returns in January to resolve this dramatic funding cut. We thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



JACK REED
United States Senator



OLYMPIA J. SNOWE
United States Senator



BERNARD SANDERS
United States Senator