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Group Calls on Congress to Continue Funding LIHEAP at \$5.1 Billion to Save Millions of Low-Income Households from Being Left out in the Cold

Illinois faces 48% cut in funding to home energy assistance program

CHICAGO, IL—(December 1, 2010)— The National Fuel Funds Network (NFFN) warned lawmakers that nearly 3 million households or 8 million Americans will be denied access to the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) if Congress fails to pass a budget before the government's continuing resolution expires at midnight on December 3.

In letters sent to members of the House and Senate, the NFFN and LIHEAP advocates stated that Congress must continue to fund LIHEAP at FY2010 and FY09 levels, \$5.1 billion, to remain an effective service that helps the unemployed and households with limited or no income stay connected to their heating and cooling utilities in these tough economic times.

"People in all parts of the country need help and not only in the winter. Energy assistance isn't a seasonal issue. It isn't a regional issue. Energy assistance is about helping people in need. It's about keeping homes safe, warm, cool and well lit." said Tom Stovall, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the NFFN.

If Congress cuts LIHEAP funding to \$3.1 billion—the level in the current continuing resolution that is funding government until December 3—states will have their budgets cut by 40 percent and millions more of Americans will be denied the home energy assistance they desperately need to stay connected to their heating and cooling utilities. Illinois faces cuts as high as 48 percent in LIHEAP funding if the continuing resolution remains beyond the December 3 deadline.

Organizations like CEDA, which administers LIHEAP services to more than 225,000 Cook County residents annually, expects any cuts in LIHEAP funding to drastically impact its ability to meet the growing demand of individuals and families in need of home energy assistance.

"We are at a critical juncture, because of the struggling economy and high unemployment rate, where more people than ever need home energy assistance," says CEDA President and CEO Robert Wharton. "Congress must continue to fund LIHEAP as it has for the last two years so that CEDA can maintain the level of service we've been able to provide residents of Cook County."

NFFN is the association of charitable fuel funds. Its more than 300 members raise and distribute over \$100 million annually to supplement federal energy assistance.

CEDA is one of the nation's largest non-profit organizations that serves more than 375,000 individuals annually and operates over 40 programs throughout Cook County in the areas of education, housing, economic development, family and children services, health and nutrition, among many others.

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