United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 1, 2006

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Freezing cold temperatures and severe winter weather remain across several parts of the nation at a time when many states have exhausted their program funds for the regular winter heating season. The high energy burden facing low-income households and cold weather in many parts of the country warrant the immediate release of the remaining $101.5 million available in Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) contingency funds.

According to a recent report by the National Energy Assistance Directors' Association (NEADA), which represents state LIHEAP directors, 12 states have now run out of program funds for the regular winter heating season: Arkansas, California, Georgia, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Rhode Island, and Utah. Other states are reporting that they are running low on funds, and in some cases are turning people away, including Washington, Missouri, Indiana, Ohio, New York, and Wyoming.

Applications for LIHEAP assistance are up 12.3 percent over last year and 5.8 million households are expected to receive assistance, 627,000 more than a year ago. This is the highest level of applications in 12 years. Increases in applications of at least 20 percent are projected by the District of Columbia and 15 states: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Florida, Kansas, Missouri, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, Washington and Wyoming.

Contributing to the increase in demand for LIHEAP assistance are high energy prices that threaten to overcome low-income families, many of which include individuals with disabilities or senior citizens living on fixed incomes. According to information released by the Energy Information Administration (EIA) on February 7, 2006, households heating primarily with natural gas can expect to spend $178, or 24 percent, more for fuel this winter than last winter. Households heating primarily with heating oil can expect to pay $195, or 16 percent, more this winter than last. Households heating primarily with propane can expect to pay $150, or 14 percent, more this winter than last. To quote EIA, "Should

colder-than-normal weather occur for the remainder of the heating season, expenditures could be significantly higher than currently projected."

No family in our nation should be forced to choose between heating their home or putting food on the table for their children. No senior citizen should have to decide between buying life saving prescriptions or paying utility bills. We urge you to immediately release the remaining balance of funds in the LIHEAP contingency fund.

Respectfully,

Jack Reed

Susan M. Collins

Edward M. Kennedy

Arlen Specter

Tom Harkin

Maria Cantwell

Olympia Snowe

Norm Coleman

Robert Menendez

Mike DeWine

Lincoln Chafee

John Kerry

Richard G. Lugar

Evan Bayh

Jeff Bingaman

Tim Johnson

Hillary Rodham Clinton

James M. Jeffords

Frank R. Lautenberg

Charles E. Schumer

Patrick Leahy

Christopher J. Dodd

Joseph I. Lieberman

Carl Levin

Lisa Murkowski

Barbara A. Mikulski

Herb Kohl

Paul Sarbanes

Debbie Stabenow

Joseph R. Biden, Jr.

Barbara Boxer

Mark L. Pryor

Richard Durbin

Byron L. Dorgan

Mark Dayton

Russell D. Feingold

Barack Obama

Thomas Carper