

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 14, 2005

The Honorable Arlen Specter
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
184 Dirksen Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
123 Hart Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ralph Regula
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
2358 Rayburn H.O.B.
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David R. Obey
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
1016 Longworth H.O.B.
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Specter and Regula and Ranking Members Harkin and Obey:

As you prepare to go to conference on the Fiscal Year 2006 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill, we write to urge you to increase funding for the highly successful Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) to \$4 billion. As the nation faces an unprecedented and unexpected surge in home energy prices due in part to the devastating tragedy of Hurricane Katrina, it is critical that the level of funding provided for this program be revisited in light of the new circumstances.

While we must fully address the exceptional circumstances of those directly affected by Hurricane Katrina, we must also address the impacts this disaster will have on heating and air conditioning prices across the country this winter and next summer. Low-income families across the nation, already struggling to pay their heating and air conditioning bills at current prices, face dramatically increased bills over the next year as a result of this disaster.

According to a report released on September 7 by the Department of Energy's Energy Information Association, for all of 2005, the DOE estimates that energy expenditures in the United States will be \$1.03 trillion, approximately 18 percent above the 2004 level. The DOE predicts residential per-household expenditures for fuels this winter to increase 71 percent for natural gas, 17 percent for electricity, 31 percent for heating oil, and 40 percent for propane compared to last winter.

Without LIHEAP, millions of senior citizens on fixed incomes, working families with children, and persons with disabilities from one end of the country to the next would be

forced to choose between heating their homes and putting food on the table. In the richest country in the world, no one should ever have to make that unacceptable choice.

Since the winter heating season of 2001-02, the price of heating oil increased from \$637 to \$1261, natural gas from \$602 to \$954 and propane from \$888 to \$1377 – and that was before the increase in prices expected from Hurricane Katrina. Meanwhile, the average LIHEAP recipient in 2005 receives a mere \$318 in assistance, and only 15% of the 32 million Americans eligible to receive LIHEAP funding actually receive it.

The Energy Information Administration predictions released on September 7 show that prices for winter fuel oil, propane and natural gas will be 218% higher this year than in 2001, when LIHEAP was funded at \$2.25 billion. Simply maintaining LIHEAP's FY 2001 purchasing power would require an appropriation of \$4.9 billion in FY 2006.

Of course, the incomes of households in the lowest income brackets have not risen commensurately over the same period and further hundreds of thousands of families became eligible last year by virtue of falling into poverty. In FY 2005, many households exhausted all benefits by the second month of their participation because the program's purchasing power had shrunk so far below its previous value. And there is no way of telling how many newly-poor consumers will be seeking assistance in the wake of their displacement by hurricane Katrina.

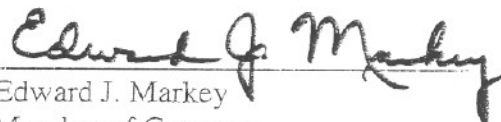
The Energy Policy Act signed just two months ago by President Bush increased the LIHEAP authorization from \$2 billion to \$5.1 billion. An FY 2006 appropriation of \$4 billion would still be \$1.1 billion below the level authorized. Coupled with any additional LIHEAP funding provided in an emergency supplemental, a \$4 billion FY 2006 appropriation for LIHEAP would provide more meaningful assistance to those already participating in the program and would help thousands of low-income Americans, the elderly and disabled keep from freezing this winter or overheating next summer.

We appreciate your consideration of this important request.

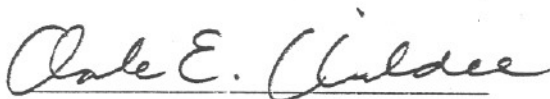
Sincerely,



Bernard Sanders
Member of Congress



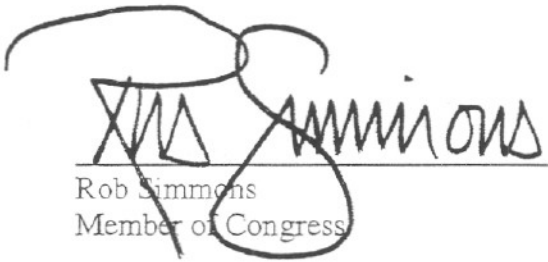
Edward J. Markey
Member of Congress



Dale E. Kildee
Member of Congress



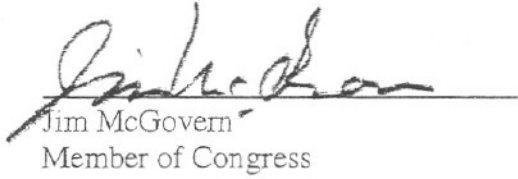
Sherwood Boehlert
Member of Congress



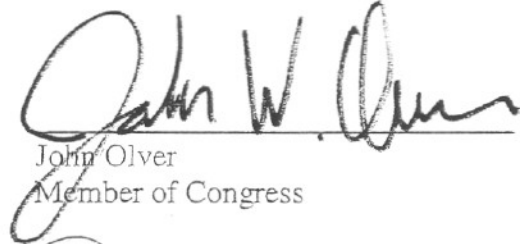
Rob Simmons
Member of Congress



Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress



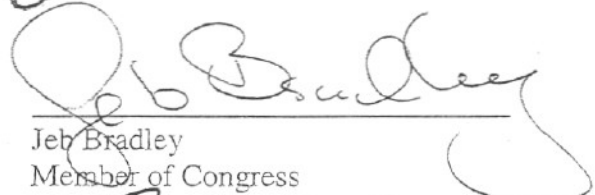
Jim McGovern
Member of Congress



John Olver
Member of Congress



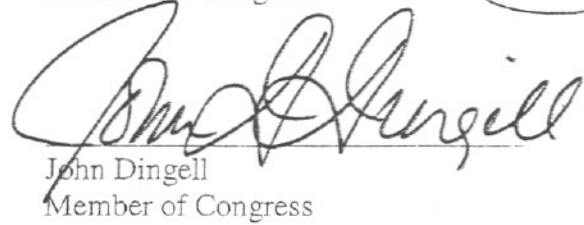
Sherrod Brown
Member of Congress



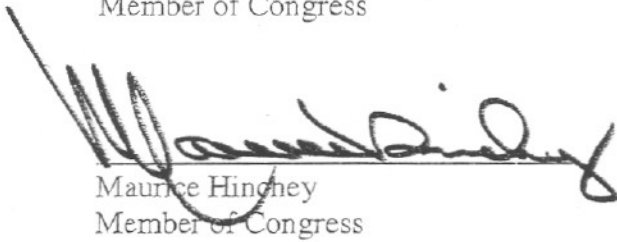
Jeb Bradley
Member of Congress



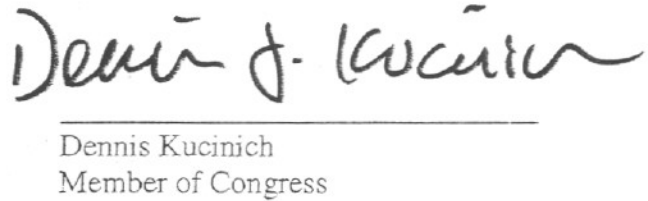
Michael F. Doyle
Member of Congress



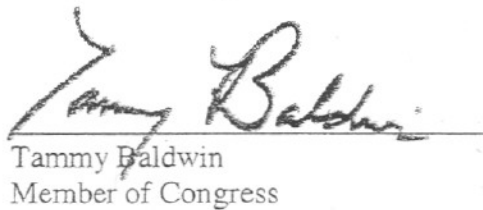
John Dingell
Member of Congress



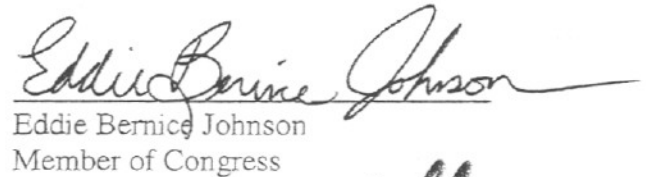
Maurice Hinchey
Member of Congress



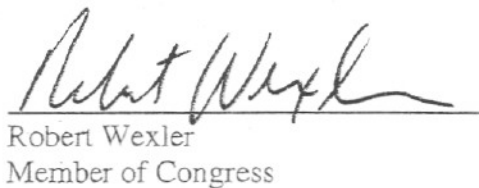
Dennis Kucinich
Member of Congress



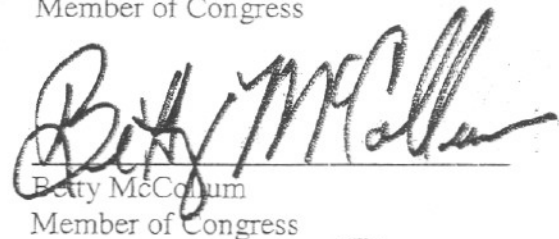
Tammy Baldwin
Member of Congress



Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress



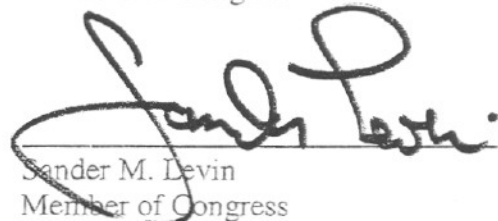
Robert Wexler
Member of Congress



Betty McCollum
Member of Congress

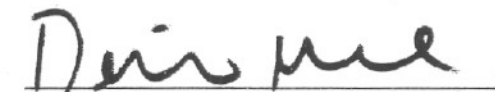


Jay Inslee
Member of Congress



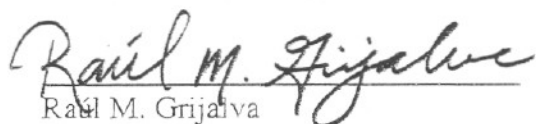
Sander M. Levin
Member of Congress


Frank Pallone
Member of Congress

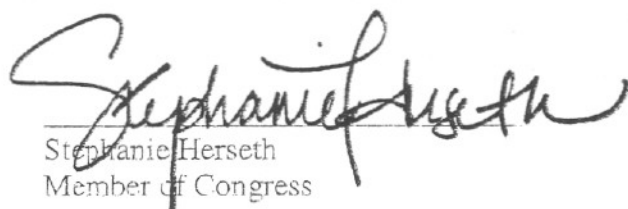

Dennis Moore
Member of Congress

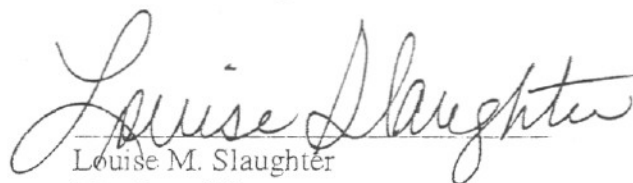

John Conyers
Member of Congress



John B. Larson
Member of Congress

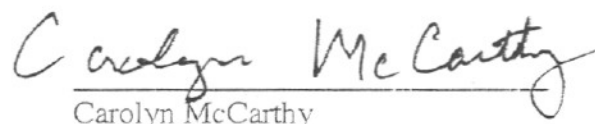

Raul M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

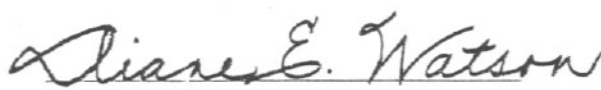

Thomas H. Allen
Member of Congress

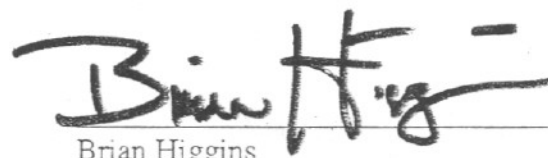

Stephanie Herseth
Member of Congress

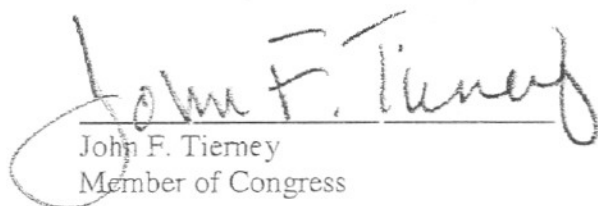

Louise M. Slaughter
Member of Congress


Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress

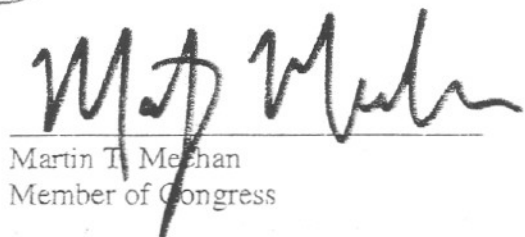

Carolyn McCarthy
Member of Congress


Diane Watson
Member of Congress


Brian Higgins
Member of Congress


John F. Tierney
Member of Congress

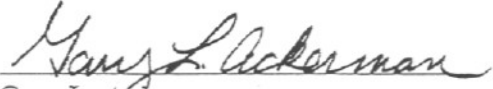

Nancy L. Johnson
Member of Congress


Martin T. Mehan
Member of Congress

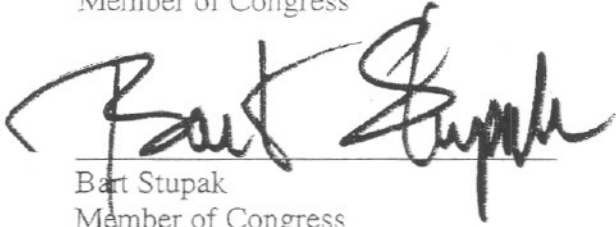

Jim McDermott
Member of Congress



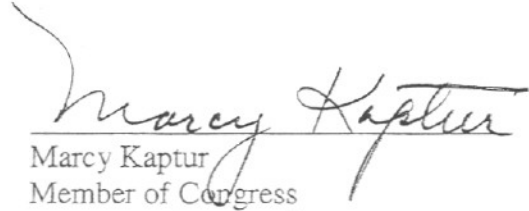
Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress



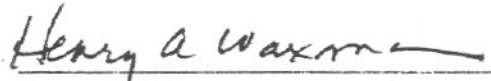
Gary L. Ackerman
Member of Congress



Bart Stupak
Member of Congress



Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress



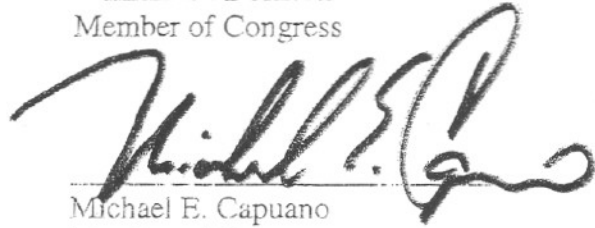
Henry A. Waxman
Member of Congress



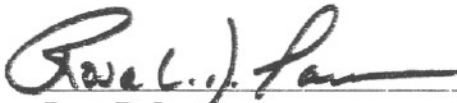
William D. Delahunt
Member of Congress



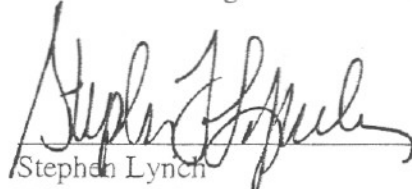
Ben Chandler
Member of Congress



Michael E. Capuano
Member of Congress



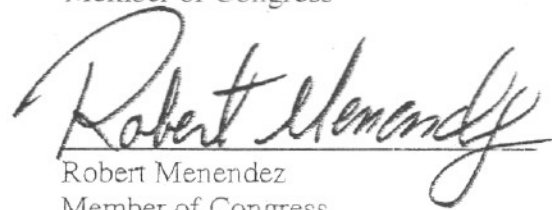
Rosa DeLauro
Member of Congress



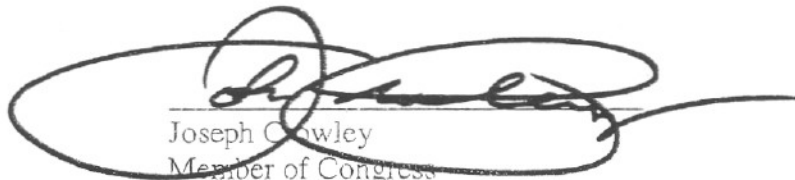
Stephen Lynch
Member of Congress



James R. Langevin
Member of Congress



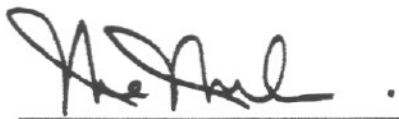
Robert Menendez
Member of Congress



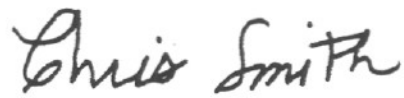
Joseph Crowley
Member of Congress



Ed Case
Member of Congress



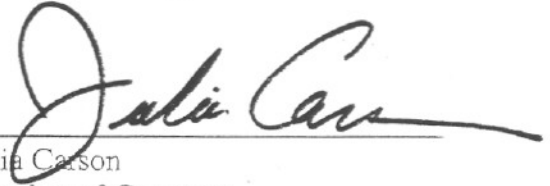
Ike Skelton
Member of Congress



Christopher Smith
Member of Congress



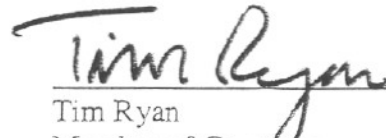
Wm. Lacy Clay
Member of Congress



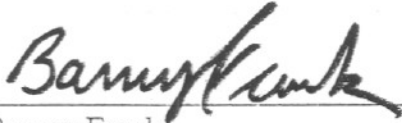
Julia Carson
Member of Congress



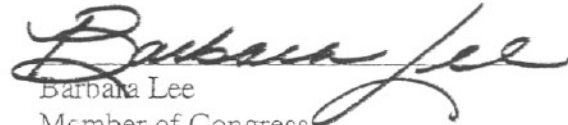
Earl Pomeroy
Member of Congress



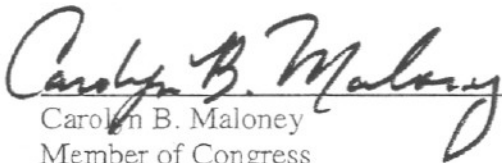
Tim Ryan
Member of Congress



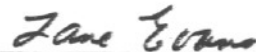
Barney Frank
Member of Congress



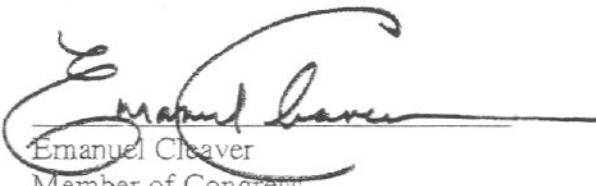
Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



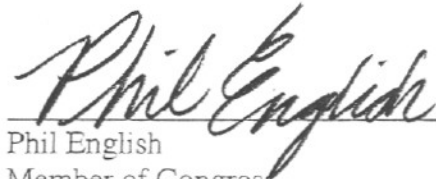
Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress



Lane Evans
Member of Congress



Emanuel Cleaver
Member of Congress



Phil English
Member of Congress



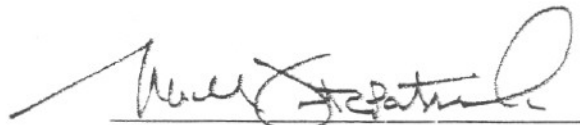
Michael Michaud
Member of Congress



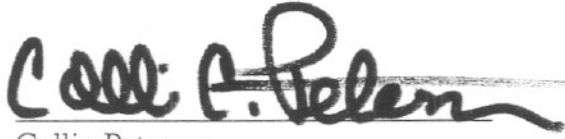
Hilda L. Solis
Member of Congress



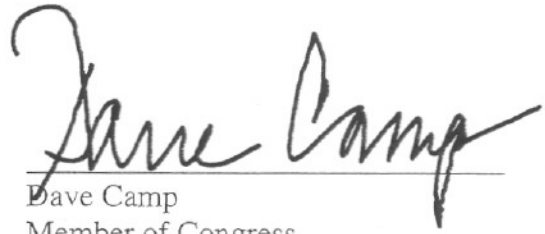
Martin Sabo
Member of Congress



Michael G. Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress



Collin Peterson
Member of Congress



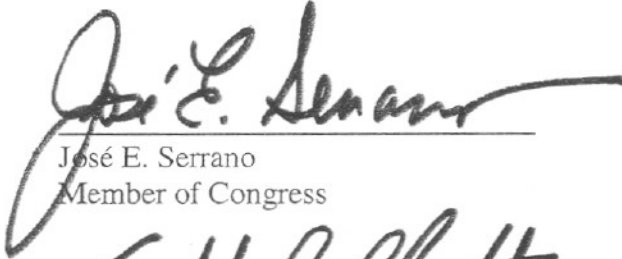
Dave Camp
Member of Congress



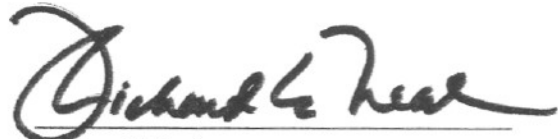
Michael R. McNulty
Member of Congress



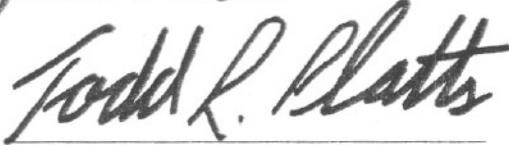
Bill Pascrell
Member of Congress



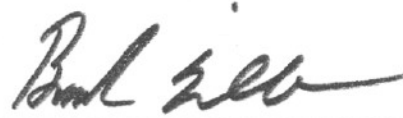
José E. Serrano
Member of Congress



Richard Neal
Member of Congress



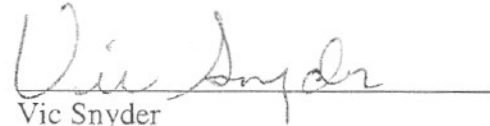
Todd Russell Platts
Member of Congress



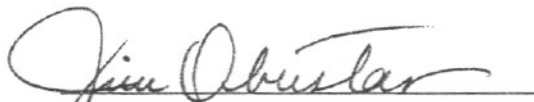
Brad Miller
Member of Congress



Ted Strickland
Member of Congress



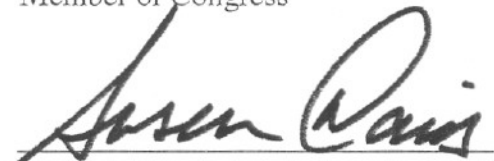
Vic Snyder
Member of Congress



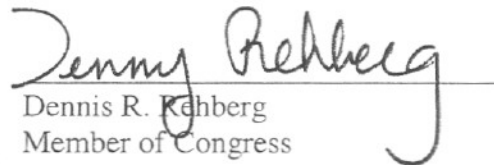
James L. Oberstar
Member of Congress



Jim Matheson
Member of Congress



Susan A. Davis
Member of Congress



Dennis R. Rehberg
Member of Congress



Robert W. Ney
Member of Congress