

Doubled Funding Passes House, Senate Expected to Act Soon

WASHINGTON, September 24 - Legislation including a key provision to double federal funding for low income home energy was sent to the Senate today after it passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 370-58.

The stopgap spending bill included a provision modeled on the "Warm in Winter Cool in Summer Act" introduced by Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) in the Senate and cosponsored by Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.). Rep. Peter Welch (D-Vt.) sponsored companion legislation in the House.

Sanders said, "The essential inclusion of \$5.1 billion, double the existing funding, is a real victory for seniors and families in Vermont and around the country who are concerned about soaring energy bills this winter. I am gratified that with the strong support of Senator Leahy and Congressman Welch we are now one big step closer to ensuring that families throughout Vermont will be able to stay warm this winter. I will do everything I can to see that it passes the Senate."

Leahy said, "There's a great need for this home heating relief, and the House and Senate are giving it the high priority that our families deserve. The White House has been quiet about whether the president will sign it. With winter fast approaching, I hope the president will think better of blocking this help from reaching the Vermonters who need it."

Welch said, "This critical boost in funding is long-overdue. Record high home-heating prices have created Vermont's Category 5 storm, threatening the well-being of too many Vermonters already struggling to get by. This funding recognizes that pressing need. If President Bush can propose an unprecedented bailout of Wall Street, surely he can support our efforts to assure no Vermonter goes cold this winter. I am proud of the coordination and work of our delegation in pushing so hard for this critical lifeline."

The legislation includes \$5.1 billion in funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. The previous fiscal year included \$2.57 billion and the president's proposed budget

Major Victory on Home Energy Assistance Clears House

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called for \$2 billion. This "continuing resolution" is an appropriations bill to continue funding the agencies of the federal government for the new fiscal year that begins Oct. 1. President Bush has not yet indicated whether he would sign the bill.

The bill also includes \$250 million for weatherization assistance. The Bush administration's budget proposed eliminating all funds from the weatherization program. The previous fiscal year budget included \$227.2 million.