

LEADERSHIP COUNCIL
of
AGING ORGANIZATIONS

Barbara B. Kennelly, Chair

August 9, 2005

The Honorable George W. Bush
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The undersigned members of the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations urge you to authorize the release of the remaining \$47.6 million in contingency funds appropriated for this year for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) in response to the dramatic heat wave that has hit many areas of the country.

As you know, much of the Western United States and Midwest has experienced an extended heat wave with temperatures of over 100 degrees for several days, and more than 200 heat records have been broken during the last two weeks, according to National Weather Service officials. The National Weather Service has issued an excessive heat warning and advisories from Illinois to Louisiana and from Nebraska to the District of Columbia, forecasting "a prolonged period of dangerously hot temperatures" around the country.

Authorities have reported 24 heat related fatalities in the Phoenix area alone since July 16. The blistering heat has also caused at least four deaths in Missouri and heat related deaths have also been reported in New Jersey.

Many low-income seniors, persons with disabilities, and families with small children need energy assistance to pay for their power bills. For many of these citizens, the inability to pay for air conditioning can result in severe reactions to excessive heat such as heat exhaustion, heat stroke, and heart failure. The release of LIHEAP contingency funds is especially important to vulnerable seniors and persons with cardio-vascular diseases that need the benefits of air conditioning during sustained heat and humidity, like we are now experiencing, in order to breathe and function.

We believe it is critical that the remaining LIHEAP contingency funds for FY 2005 be made available to assist local agencies in affected states in meeting the increased energy needs among low-income families and the elderly during this extended summer heat wave.

Thank you for timely consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

*AARP
AFSCME Retiree Program
Alliance for Retired Americans*

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American Association for International Aging
American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging
American Federation of Teachers Program on Retirement & Retirees
B'nai B'rith International Center
Eldercare America, Inc.
Meals on Wheels Association of America
National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys
National Association of Area Agencies on Aging
National Association of Nutrition and Aging services Programs
National Association of Retired and Senior Volunteer Program Directors, Inc.
National Association of Senior Companion Project Directors
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Units on Aging
National Caucus and Center on Black Aged, Inc
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare
National Council on the Aging
National Indian Council on Aging, Inc.
National Senior Citizens Law Center
OWL, the voice of midlife and older women
United Jewish Communities

cc: Joshua Bolten, Director, Office of Management and Budget
Secretary Mike Leavitt, Department of Health and Human Services