



AMERICAN PUBLIC GAS ASSOCIATION

July 15, 2009

Honorable Jerry Lewis
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Ranking Member Lewis:

On behalf of the American Public Gas Association (APGA), I want to express our thanks and strong support for including the full \$5.1 billion for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) in the Fiscal Year 2010 Labor, HHS and Education Appropriations bill. This increased funding will help ensure thousands more low income and at risk citizens are able to meet their energy needs.

APGA is the national association representing over 700 municipally and publicly-owned local natural gas distribution systems that work to meet the daily energy needs of over 5 million customers in 36 states. Publicly-owned gas systems are not-for-profit retail distribution entities that are owned by, and accountable to, the citizens they serve. They include municipal gas distribution systems, public utility districts, county districts, and other public agencies that have natural gas distribution facilities.

Since 1981, the number of households eligible for LIHEAP assistance has grown, while the number of households served has declined. This trend must not continue. The current economic recession has forced many families into difficult choices between paying their energy bills or paying for other necessities such as prescription drugs, food and childcare.

LIHEAP, now more than ever, plays a critical role in helping low-income families meet their energy needs. Low-income households spend on average 15 percent of their budget on home energy costs, while other households only spend roughly 3.4 percent of their annual budget on such costs. LIHEAP is a successful federal program that allows for these families to receive grants to help ease the burden of paying for record-high heating and cooling bills.

For these reasons, APGA strongly urges the Committee to maintain the full \$5.1 billion appropriation for LIHEAP in FY 2010. I thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Bert Kalisch
President & CEO