



Capitol Report

From New Hampshire Senator Lou D'Allesandro • Fall 2008

A SPECIAL REPORT *on the winter heating fuel crisis*

Sen. Lou D'Allesandro speaks at a recent special session of the New Hampshire Legislature. He and his colleagues set aside more money to help the neediest with their home heating costs through the state's low-income heating assistance program.



Volunteers needed

One of the consistent messages I've heard about the winter heating crisis is the need for volunteers.

If you have some time to help out, please call 211. You will be referred to one of the local agencies looking for volunteers.

Also remember to check in regularly with your neighbors, particularly the elderly, to make sure that they are safe and warm. Thank you for your help. ★

Help is on the way for families in need

As I travel around Senate District 20, the No. 1 concern I hear from everyone is winter heating fuel costs — and how families are struggling to find the money to pay their heating bills.

I, too, share this concern. I believe no one should go without heat this winter. No one should have to choose between food and fuel.

In order to make sure that

we have the resources and the personnel in place and ready to help in Manchester and Goffstown, I sponsored a Fuel Assistance Forum in August to bring together all of the state and local service agencies responsible for providing assistance to people needing help.

Elsewhere in this newsletter you will find contact information for fuel assistance and for other

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Do you have a comment?

**You may contact
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www.nh.gov.

www.gencourt.state.nh.us/ie/

Simple conservation steps make cents

You can take simple steps to lower your heating bills:

- Make sure a professional performs maintenance on your heating system every year.
- Clean and vacuum around warm-air registers, baseboard heaters and radiators.
- Make sure they are not blocked by furniture, carpets and drapes.
- Regularly clean and replace furnace filters.
- Install a programmable thermostat that adjusts the temperature in your home or apartment according to your schedule.
- Insulate your hot water heater and hot water pipes to prevent heat loss. Set your water temperature at 120 degrees.
- Insulate all heating ducts in unheated areas such as attics and crawlspaces to reduce heat loss.
- Place heat-resistant radiator reflectors between exterior walls and the radiators.
- Bleed trapped air from hot water radiators once or twice during the winter.
- Reverse the direction of ceiling fans so they turn clockwise, to push warm air downward and force it to recirculate. ★



Help

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programs to help people through the winter.

Many of these programs have income eligibility requirements, but only income regularly received from employment, self-employment, child support, and social security is counted. Home ownership and savings accounts are not counted as part of income.

State and local agency officials stressed to me that if people think they might need help this winter, they should apply even if they don't think they will qualify. If the income requirements change, then people who are just above the income threshold could become eligible, and those people who had completed applications on file would be notified that they could get help.

I have been in contact with both of our congressional representatives, Carol Shea Porter and Paul Hodes, regarding federal fuel assistance

funds. The U.S. House of Representatives has approved \$5.1 billion in federal spending for the program, and New Hampshire would get at least \$34 million of that. This is \$2 million more than we received last year.

If the U.S. Senate approves the House-backed measure, we could receive as much as \$45 million after contingency funds are included in the total available amount for the state.

Our Legislature in a recent special session also made \$10 million of state money available to help people heat their homes (\$1.2 million to help insulate and weatherize homes). We must be prepared because our current economic uncertainties also make it difficult to predict what it will cost us to heat our homes.

I am confident that the state, Manchester and Goffstown officials will be prepared to help those who need heating assistance this coming winter. ★

Weatherization program gets boost in funds

We know that weatherizing our homes is the best way to reduce our heating costs.

Every effort we make to keep heat inside and cold outside saves us money by reducing the amount we spend for heat.

The state Office of Energy and Planning operates a winter weatherization program, and last month Governor Lynch and the state Legislature approved special legislation providing \$1.2 million more to the state's \$1.5 million weatherization program. Renters and homeowners are both eligible for the weatherization program.

There is an income eligibility requirement for this program. If you are eligible for the fuel assistance program, you automatically qualify for the weatherization program.

If you are eligible for the weatherization program, experts will audit your home to find the best ways to improve heating efficiency. Qualified work crews will repair heating systems, buy insulation for walls and attics, seal and secure windows or replace them with new thermal windows, and generally make homes more energy efficient. ★

Visit www.staywarmnh.org, a new website that provides information on winter heating resources across New Hampshire and general energy-saving tips.

ServiceLink offers one-stop assistance

ServiceLink is a statewide network of community designed to help seniors, adults with disabilities and their families find the right programs and services to meet their needs — including help to stay warm this winter.

ServiceLink is a one-stop, free information, referral and assistance service that connects seniors and adults with disabilities to the appropriate program to help them.

The statewide toll free number is 866-634-9412. In Manchester and Goffstown, the local number is 644-2240. ServiceLink also has a web site www.nh.gov/servicelink, where there is a special section just on heating needs this winter. ★

Need help? Call 211

Too often, when individuals and families don't always know where to turn when they need help getting through difficult times.

Now that help is one phone call away. Dial 211 to get connected and get answers. The TYY number for hearing impaired is 3-634-3388.

This is a new, free and confidential assistance service program of the United Way in partnership with the state of New Hampshire, Public Service of New Hampshire, Citizens Bank and the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation.

If you or someone you know needs help with housing, food, fuel, medicine or some other critical need this winter, this one phone number will put you in touch with someone who will help direct you to the appropriate state or local program that can answer your questions and begin to offer assistance. ★

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

ServiceLink

1-866-634-9412 (toll free) • Manchester 644-2240 • Nashua 598-4709
866-444-4211: Info and referral for food, housing, consumer services

Southern New Hampshire Services

Weatherization 668-8010 • Manchester 647-4470 • Nashua 889-3440
www.snhs.org

Housing and Human Services District Offices

Manchester 668-2330, 195 McGregor St.
Nashua 883-7726, 19 Chestnut St.
Walk-in hours 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Client Services: 1-800-852-3345, ext. 4238



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Manchester, NH 03102-4950

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For residents of Goffstown and Manchester wards 3, 4, 10 and 11

Paid for by the Committee to Elect Lou D'Allesandro, Patricia D'Allesandro, Fiscal Agent

Aid available for electric bills

The NH Electric Assistance Program gives eligible customers a discount on their monthly electric bills. Both homeowners and renters are eligible to participate in the program. The discount varies from 5 percent up to 70 percent, depending on your gross household income and the number of people living in your home.

Customers of National Grid, NH Electric Cooperative, Public Service of New Hampshire and Unil may apply for the discount.

The Public Utilities Commission has just raised the low-income system benefits charge to provide bill discounts to an additional 6,000 low-income customers for the winter. As part of restructuring the electric industry in New Hampshire in 1996, the Legislature

established the system benefits charge as a means for funding programs that enable low-income customers to manage and afford essential electricity needs.

To find out if you or someone you know is eligible for help paying electric bills this winter, call your utility company, the 211 help line, or ServiceLink if you are a senior citizen or an adult with a disability.

The new criteria adopted by the state Public Utilities Commission mean that more low-income individuals will be eligible for electricity discounts. And, remember that NH law prohibits electric companies from discontinuing your service during

the winter months if you are unable to pay your electric bill.

