

Governor Patterson Announces Plans to Help with Home Heating
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**GOVERNOR PATERSON ANNOUNCES PLAN TO HELP LOW-INCOME NEW
YORKERS COPE WITH HIGH HEATING COSTS THIS WINTER**
*\$49 Million Added to Low-Income Household Energy Efficiency Programs
Renews Call on Federal Government to Increase Funding for Heating Assistance*

Governor David A. Paterson today announced a comprehensive package of state initiatives to help New York households reduce their energy use and spend less to heat their homes this winter. The package includes significant increases in benefits and changes to eligibility levels for the State's heating assistance program, an additional \$49 million for household energy efficiency programs, improved agency administration of efficiency and heating assistance programs, and expanded workshops to help homeowners and renters to reduce their energy use at little or no cost.

"The State has an obligation to help our residents get through this winter in any way we can. While we cannot influence world energy prices in any significant way, we can reduce the amount of energy we use and effectively lower our energy bills. The cheapest energy is the energy never used," said Governor Paterson. "This is a first-step in New York's efforts to address the high cost of heating fuel this winter. We are taking this action to provide additional funding to help the State's residents reduce their energy bills, at little or no cost, while maintaining the level of comfort New Yorkers deserve."

Governor Paterson announced the following actions:

- The State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) is planning to increase the maximum grant offered through the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP). All eligible HEAP recipients that heat with a deliverable fuel (oil, propane or kerosene) will receive an \$800 regular benefit. This represents a 48 percent increase over the current maximum benefit of \$540, which will help address high fuel prices. In addition, the HEAP emergency benefit will increase from \$700 to \$800 for these recipients. Household income eligibility levels for the program will also be expanded to the maximum permitted under federal law. As a result, a family of four with up to \$45,312 in annual income can now access HEAP benefits.
- OTDA, the Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR) and the Office for the Aging (OFA) are in the process of developing procedures to ensure that the most at-risk HEAP recipients receive priority for weatherization services.
- The Public Service Commission (PSC) has increased the amount of low-income funding provided by local utility companies and the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) by \$32 million, to improve the energy efficiency of homes. NYSERDA will also spend an additional \$2 million this winter to help more New Yorkers reduce their energy use while also keeping their homes heated.
- The New York Power Authority (NYPA) is offering a \$5 million “Weatherization Blitz” to customers served by municipal electric systems throughout Upstate New York. NYPA will distribute “do-it-yourself” kits and energy savings tip sheets to residents through these utilities that could result in energy savings in the upcoming months.
- The Long Island Power Authority (LIPA) is making \$10 million available to its low-income senior customers for direct bill payment assistance. In addition, LIPA will be expanding its support for improved energy efficiency in homes for all of its customers in Long Island and New York City.
- The Department of Public Service will hold an emergency summit to discuss expanding utility budget billing programs and other options for making bill payment easier, and consider changes to termination policies to reduce the likelihood of service disruptions during cold weather months.

Governor Paterson said today that in addition to the State’s actions, this year’s anticipated home heating crisis will require legislation for a more comprehensive and longer-term solution.

In addition, State agencies and authorities that offer energy efficiency and heating assistance programs will coordinate outreach efforts to help New Yorkers gain access to information and services. The participating agencies include the Consumer Protection Board, DHCR, NYSERDA, OFA, OTDA, PSC, LIPA and NYPA. The improved and coordinated outreach will make it easier for residents to find the assistance they need.

Governor Paterson will shortly unveil a new website and hotline number hosted by NYSERDA that will provide information on all the State's heating-related programs. NYSERDA will also coordinate a series of workshops that will be held around the State to inform New Yorkers of the actions they can take to lower their heating bills by making their homes more energy-efficient.

Governor Paterson also renewed his call for additional funding for the federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and added: "The state initiatives I announced today do not eliminate the need for additional federal funding for LIHEAP. The federal government must not ignore the reality of record high heating prices when considering funding levels for this essential program. To keep LIHEAP funding at last year's level when heating costs are 30-40 percent higher this year would be unconscionable and place vulnerable New Yorkers at even greater risk."

The Governor is again calling on Congress and the President to immediately fund LIHEAP at the authorized level of \$5.1 billion, and for the President to release \$100 million in LIHEAP contingency funds that will otherwise expire on September 30, the end of the current federal fiscal year.