

HENRY C. "HANK" JOHNSON, JR.
4TH DISTRICT, GEORGIA

COMMITTEES:

JUDICIARY

ARMED SERVICES

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1004

SUBCOMMITTEES:

CRIME, TERRORISM, AND
HOMELAND SECURITY

COURTS, COMMERCIAL AND
ADMINISTRATIVE LAW

SEAPOW AND PROJECTION FORCES

EMERGING THREATS AND CAPABILITIES

December 2, 2011

The Honorable John A. Boehner
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
H-232 United States Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
United States House of Representatives
H-204 United States Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Norman D. Dicks
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner, Leader Pelosi, Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Dicks:

The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) provides a vital safety net for our nation's low-income families. As you know, the current Continuing Resolution expires on December 16, 2011. As you work to develop an omnibus appropriations bill for FY2012, I urge you to fund LIHEAP at least at the FY2011 levels of \$4.7 billion.

Uncertainty over the FY2012 funding level is making it difficult to operate the LIHEAP program and is negatively impacting families in my district. This week alone, I have received dozens of calls from constituents who are unable to pay their bills and who are unable to receive LIHEAP funding as a direct result of the inability of Congress to approve an FY2012 appropriations bill. I am pleased that the Secretary of Health and Human Services, on October 28th, released more than \$1.7 billion to help low income citizens with their heating and home energy costs. Unfortunately, that is less than half of what was authorized and congressional inaction is making it difficult for the Secretary to release money that is necessary to help needy families in my district.

As a result of the economic downturn and continued high and rising energy prices, record numbers of families are turning to LIHEAP for assistance for the third year in a row. According to the National Energy Assistance Director's Association (NEADA), roughly 8.9 million families nationwide received LIHEAP heating assistance last winter, an increase of 16 percent from two years ago. But even at those levels, only roughly 20 percent of the families eligible for assistance received LIHEAP aid. Reducing funding for LIHEAP to under \$3.4 billion, as the House Appropriations Committee's draft Labor, Health and Human Services appropriations bill would do, would mean that roughly 2 million families nationwide would no longer be able to receive help from this vital program.

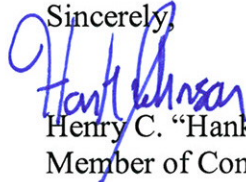
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According to a survey conducted by the National Energy Assistance Director's Association, nearly one third of families receiving LIHEAP assistance reported that they went without food during the last five years as a result of high home energy costs. Over 40 percent of families reported sacrificing medical care and 25 percent reported that someone in the home became sick because the home was too cold. Energy is a basic need and without LIHEAP assistance, low income families, senior citizens and the disabled face difficult choices between paying their home energy bills or affording other basic necessities such as prescription drugs or food.

I urge you to bring a FY2012 appropriations bill to a vote that fully funds LIHEAP because every day of delay has a devastating impact on families already suffering in my district and around the country.

Thank you for your continued support of the LIHEAP program and your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson
Member of Congress

Cc: The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary of Health and Human Services