



News Release

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Long-Term Solution Urgently Needed as State Energy Affordability Gap Hits \$585 Million

HARTFORD, Conn., February 11, 2010 -- Operation Fuel stressed the urgency for long-term solutions to alleviate Connecticut's home energy affordability crisis for lower income households during a news conference today at the state capitol where it released a report that shows the state's annual gap is now \$585 million – an increase of \$330 million from just three years ago.

During 2008-2009, lower-income Connecticut families and senior citizens faced a home energy affordability gap of over \$2,550 per household – this is the difference between what they can afford and what they actually owed for energy bills.

This problem is statewide and distributed fairly evenly across Connecticut's five congressional districts, according to the **Home Energy Affordability Gap: Connecticut (2009)** report, which was prepared for Operation Fuel by regional economist Roger D. Colton, a partner with Fisher, Sheehan & Colton Public Finance and General Economics, of Belmont, Mass.

Last year, Operation Fuel provided a record \$6 million in emergency energy assistance through its statewide network of energy banks to more than 13,000 households. Meanwhile the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) provided \$96 million during 2009 in federal energy assistance to our state, which covered only 16.4 percent of Connecticut's home energy affordability gap.

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“Operation Fuel’s mission is to help Connecticut’s poor and vulnerable residents stay warm, safe, and healthy in their homes. We can accomplish this by working with the state of Connecticut and our energy companies to solve our state’s ever-growing home energy affordability gap. Together, we can make a difference,” explained Operation Fuel Executive Director Patricia Wrice.

The Home Energy Affordability Gap: Connecticut (2009) report has proposed long-term solutions for funding energy assistance. Among them are:

- Affordable rate assistance through the state’s public utilities – there are successful programs operating in other states that can be duplicated in Connecticut.
- Increased funding for the federal LIHEAP program, which would help to reduce the energy burden on low-income households.
- Aggressive fundraising efforts by Connecticut’s public utilities to assist Operation Fuel and its local fuel funds.

Operation Fuel is a private, non-profit statewide program that provides emergency energy assistance to lower-income working families, the elderly and disabled individuals who are in financial crisis and not eligible for, or have exhausted, government benefits.

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