

SCR-4, As Adopted by Senate, March 6, 2007

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 4

A concurrent resolution to memorialize the President and the Congress of the United States to increase funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program and to facilitate the establishment of programs that provide information about responsible energy use.

Whereas, Each winter, public and private programs offering help to low-income families trying to heat their homes usually find their budgets stretched thin; and

Whereas, Fortunately, there is a federally funded program that provides energy assistance to low-income households. The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is a federal block grant program that provides billions of dollars annually to help low-income households pay energy bills. LIHEAP funds have averted numerous tragedies by enabling needy families to keep their homes at healthy and safe temperatures during the bitter cold months of winter; and

Whereas, Utility companies, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations often make information available to low-income families to help reduce their heating bills. Such information often recognizes the need for reducing home energy costs through the use of conservation technologies and flexible bill payment practices designed to help empower low-income consumers to pay their utility bills on a discounted basis; and

Whereas, Coordinated and efficient consumer education programs of federal, state, and local agencies could help consumers take responsibility for their winter heating bills. Educational programming on things such as how to set proper temperatures in the home, the use of programmable thermostats, tips on household budgeting, how to weatherize a home, and energy efficiency training could better prepare low-income households with the skills needed to control their winter heating costs; and

Whereas, The President's proposed budget for next year would reduce the percentage of eligible needy families that receive LIHEAP assistance. The President is requesting only \$1.782 billion for LIHEAP in FY 2008. This is far less than the \$5.1 billion that is authorized for the program under the U.S. Energy Policy Act of 2005 and a dramatic 44 percent reduction from FY 2006 funding levels. According to the National Energy Assistance Directors' Association (NEADA), the President's proposed cut to LIHEAP would force states to eliminate energy assistance to more than a million households; and

Whereas, The President's proposal would hit Michigan particularly hard. No other northern climate state is suffering through such tough economic times. Michigan finished last year with one of the nation's worst unemployment rates, second only to Mississippi. Since 2003, the unemployment rate in Michigan has exceeded the national rate by an ever-widening margin. As the number of unemployed persons in the state grows, so too does the number of households seeking energy assistance. In spite of this, under the President's proposal, it is estimated that the state would receive nearly \$50 million less than it did last year. Clearly, we should educate customers on how to use energy wisely and we should adequately fund the LIHEAP program to ensure that low-income families in Michigan and across the nation receive the help they need during the bitter cold months of winter; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That we memorialize the President and the Congress of the United States, particularly the Michigan congressional delegation and the Chairman of the Committee on Energy and Commerce, to do all they can to provide additional funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program and facilitate the establishment of programs that provide information on responsible energy use; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the Office of the President of the United States, the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, and the members of the Michigan congressional delegation.