

Rep. Brown offered the following resolution:

**House Resolution No. 414.**

A resolution to urge the President and Congress of the United States to boost federal funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program in anticipation of high heating costs this winter.

Whereas, At the same time as Americans are struggling to pay for warm-weather energy consumption, experts are predicting that home heating fuel prices will be higher than ever this winter. According to a story in the *Wall Street Journal*, utilities and industry analysts estimate that it will cost families 30 to 50 percent more to heat their homes with natural gas this winter. Families who use heating oil could face increases of between 50 percent and 100 percent, while the U.S. Energy Information Administration expects propane prices to average 30 percent higher this year than last year. These price increases will surely cause worry for families already struggling under the weight of high gasoline prices and a faltering economy; and

Whereas, America's primary means of helping needy families pay for heating fuel and keep warm in the winter is being weakened by funding cuts. Since the 1980s, the low income home energy assistance program (LIHEAP), a federal block grant program, has been helping society's most vulnerable citizens pay for heating fuels in the winter. Since 2005, when Congress appropriated a record \$3.2 billion, however, LIHEAP funding has been steadily going downward. Last year the President requested just \$1.78 billion. For the fiscal year 2009 budget, the President has only requested \$2 billion. In the meantime, the proportion of American households living in poverty continues to grow, particularly low-income elderly and single-parent households. Despite this, the funding cuts to LIHEAP have forced state social service agencies to reduce the numbers of families they can help and reduce the value of the LIHEAP benefit each family receives; and

Whereas, Social service agencies in northern states are justifiably concerned that they could be facing a dire situation if the upcoming winter is particularly harsh or cold. Extremely cold weather coupled with skyrocketing heating fuel prices and less federal aid may cause many low-income and even middle-income families to make choices that no one should have to make. They may have to choose between paying their bills, buying food, purchasing prescription drugs, or staying warm. When the temperature falls below zero, staying warm becomes a matter of life and death, and LIHEAP assistance becomes imperative. An elderly Michigan resident who was unable to pay her heating bill froze to death last winter. Surely, we must do everything we can to prevent such a tragedy from ever happening again, now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives, That we urge the President and Congress of the United States to boost federal funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program in anticipation of high heating costs this winter; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to 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.