



December 9, 2011

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

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

The Hon. Daniel K. Inouye, Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Hon. Thad Cochran, Vice Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Rogers and Inouye and Ranking Members Dicks and Cochran:

We write today in support of the bipartisan Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) Protection Act (S.1961), introduced this week by Senators Jack Reed of Rhode Island, Olympia Snowe of Maine and Bernie Sanders of Vermont along with 17 co-sponsors. The bill would maintain funding for the program at last year's level of \$4.7 billion – funding necessary to prevent millions households from losing their fuel assistance benefits.

The Petroleum Marketers Association of America (PMAA) is a national federation of 48 state and regional trade associations representing over 8,000 independent petroleum marketing companies. These companies own 60,000 convenience store/gas stations and supply gasoline and diesel fuel to an additional 40,000 stores. PMAA member companies sell at retail 90 percent of the heating oil consumed in the U.S. The New England Fuel Institute (NEFI) is a member of PMAA and an independent trade association representing some 1,200 home heating fuel retailers and related services companies, most of which are small family owned- and operated-businesses.

Unlike larger energy companies, our members practically hand-deliver fuel directly to the doorsteps of their customers. They have developed a close relationship with homeowners and their local communities, and have seen firsthand the burdens that the ongoing housing, financial and unemployment crises have placed on many disadvantaged Americans. For lower income families with young children, disabled individuals and the elderly, federal and state fuel assistance programs provide some measure of relief in these difficult times.

In his FY2012 budget request the President proposed a 50 percent cut to LIHEAP, which would provide a mere \$2.57 billion for the program, citing lower home energy costs despite the fact that nearly all Americans are experiencing higher, not lower, energy bills. Senate appropriators have proposed a budget of \$3.6 billion and the House has sought \$3.4 billion. While our nation faces significant fiscal challenges and the LIHEAP program is not perfect, proposed cuts could affect as many as three million households.

PMAA and NEFI urge members of Congress to protect the most vulnerable Americans. Please support full LIHEAP funding and the immediate passage of S.1961.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Dan Gilligan
PMAA President

Michael Trunzo,
NEFI President & CEO