September 28, 2005

The Honorable Arlen Specter
Chairman, Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services and Education
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services and Education
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Ralph Regula
Chairman, Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services and Education
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David R. Obey
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services and Education
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Gentlemen,

Even before the tragic devastation of the Gulf Coast, low-income residents in our states faced significant increases in energy costs this winter. In this light, and with the added consideration of the hurricanes' impact, we are writing to request additional funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). We ask that you provide an immediate $1.276 billion in emergency LIHEAP funds in the next available emergency supplemental appropriations bill. These funds are necessary to meet the needs of both newly-displaced evacuees and existing LIHEAP recipients. For Fiscal Year 2006, we would urge that you increase regular LIHEAP funds significantly from current levels. The recent increase in LIHEAP authorization to $5.1B, signed into law last month as part of the Energy Policy Act, provides adequate room for a substantial increase.

The Energy Information Administration (EIA) had projected consumer energy costs would rise by about 20 percent this winter. The EIA has recently updated its figures and is now projecting that costs will be 77 percent higher than last winter. Consequently, our state LIHEAP programs are expecting to see a surge in applications for the program. LIHEAP budgets will be further stretched as we attempt to meet the needs of hurricane evacuees, many of whom lost virtually everything in the storm. Additional funding will allow us to aid these newest residents and those who have traditionally relied on LIHEAP assistance.

Congress must recognize that covering dramatic increases in natural gas and heating oil prices will pose an immense challenge for our citizens as winter arrives. Therefore, we encourage you to give strong consideration to the above requests. Immediate emergency funding, and a significant increase in regular LIHEAP funding for FY 2006, would allow critical energy needs to be addressed before a crisis develops. We also feel strongly that Congress should ensure that these additional funds are distributed to all states based on residents' demonstrated needs.

We appreciate your work and commitment to assisting our neediest families and we urge you to increase funding for the LIHEAP.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Governor Jennifer Granholm
Michigan

Governor Mitt Romney
Massachusetts

Governor Mike Huckabee
Arkansas

Governor Ruth Ann Minner
Delaware

Governor Rod Blagojevich
Illinois

Governor Thomas Vilsack
Iowa

Governor Kathleen Sebelius
Kansas

Governor John Baldacci
Maine

Governor Robert Ehrlich
Maryland

Governor Tim Pawlenty
Minnesota

Governor Haley Barbour
Mississippi

Governor Brian Schweitzer
Montana

Governor Richard Codey
New Jersey

Governor Bill Richardson
New Mexico

Governor George Pataki
New York

Governor Michael Easley
North Carolina

Governor Bob Taft
Ohio

Governor Ted Kulongoski
Oregon

Governor Edward Rendell
Pennsylvania

Governor Anibal Acevedo-Vila
Puerto Rico

Governor Don Carcieri
Rhode Island

Governor James H. Douglas
Vermont

Governor Mark Warner
Virginia

Governor Christine Gregoire
Washington

Governor Joe Manchin III
West Virginia

Governor Jim Doyle
Wisconsin

Governor Dave Freudenthal
Wyoming

Governor M. Jodi Rell
Connecticut

Cc: The Honorable Bill Frist, Senate Majority Leader
The Honorable Harry Reid, Senate Minority Leader
The Honorable J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, House Democratic Leader
The Honorable Thad Cochran, Chairman of Senate Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Robert C. Byrd, Ranking Member of Senate Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Jerry Lewis, Chairman of House Appropriations Committee