

Resolution Supporting the Adequate Funding of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

WHEREAS, The National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) recognizes adequate utility service to be a vital key to the health and safety of American households; *and*

WHEREAS, The severe constraints on State budgets and the increased strain on the nation's support system provided by nonprofit, faith-based, and other community organizations have limited the resources available for energy assistance; *and*

WHEREAS, The applications for energy assistance have increased from 2003 to 2004 by an estimated 5.3 percent based on preliminary applications, with more than five million households seeking assistance, the highest number in the past ten years; *and*

WHEREAS, LIHEAP would need to be funded at \$3 billion to equal the purchasing power it had in 1982; *and*

WHEREAS, LIHEAP provides vital heating and cooling assistance to low-income families, including working poor households, senior citizens, and persons with disabilities; *and*

WHEREAS, A national survey of LIHEAP recipients published in 2004 found that families that cannot pay their energy bills cut back on food, medicine and other necessities in order to heat their homes; *and*

WHEREAS, A national survey of LIHEAP recipients conducted in 2003 by the National Energy Agency Director's Association (NEADA) found that LIHEAP makes a critical difference. LIHEAP funding enabled: 1) 62% of LIHEAP recipients to have their heat restored; 2) 54% of LIHEAP recipients to keep their homes at safe and healthy temperatures; and 3) 48% of LIHEAP recipients were able to avoid disconnection; *and*

WHEREAS, LIHEAP is a targeted block grant program which provides built-in flexibility in Federal-State partnerships and is the foundation for many programs authorized by State public utility commissions to assist low-income customers to meet their bill payment obligations through direct assistance, arrearage forgiveness, and reduction of bills to more affordable levels, to prevent service terminations in winter as well as during heat emergencies, to make the transition from public assistance to economic self-reliance, to help working poor households remain economically self-sufficient, and to weatherize their homes, repair defective heating equipment, and reduce energy usage; *and*

WHEREAS, The Energy Information Administration's latest Short-Term Energy Outlook suggests that portions of the country are facing heating oil costs that have risen since last heating season by 34 percent for heating oil, 20 percent for propane prices, and 10 percent for natural gas; *and*

WHEREAS, The National Fuel Funds Network and other groups supporting increased LIHEAP funding have asked that the remaining \$98 million of contingency funding authorized for FY 2005 be released and that LIHEAP funding be increased to \$3.4 billion in fiscal year 2006; *and*

WHEREAS, Insufficient funding for LIHEAP will undermine and threaten the continuation of a number of State initiatives that have relied on the LIHEAP program to be the foundation for providing a modest amount of energy security for low-income Americans; *now therefore be it*

RESOLVED, That the Board of Directors of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC), convened at its February 2005 Winter Meetings in Washington, D.C., urges the Administration to release the remaining \$98 million in emergency LIHEAP funds for FY 2005; *and be it further*

RESOLVED, That the NARUC Board urges the Congress to appropriate LIHEAP funding of at least \$3.4 billion in the FY 2006 budget.

Sponsored by the Committees on Consumer Affairs and Gas

Adopted by the NARUC Board of Directors February 16, 2005