

Resolution of NARUC To Support The Adequate Funding of the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

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

WHEREAS, Low-income families, including the elderly and many working poor Americans, face a continuing energy crisis with many facing energy burdens that exceed 20% of their household income; and

WHEREAS, The number of U.S. households without utility service has been rising, despite moderation in energy prices since the last winter; and

WHEREAS, Since last year, the number of households applying for and receiving LIHEAP has increased 30% (or almost 1.2 million households), from the 5 million households who requested LIHEAP assistance in the winter of 2000-2001, and the States indicate an increased number of requests for LIHEAP assistance in FY 2002; and

WHEREAS, The events of September 11th and the adverse affects of the weakening economy have increased unemployment while severely straining the nation's support systems provided by nonprofit, faith-based, and other community organizations, causing both an escalation in need for services and a shortfall in contributions; and

WHEREAS, Electric and natural gas costs pose great risks to the ability of low-income families, including the elderly and

many working poor Americans, to afford essential home energy services; 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, When LIHEAP funding is often not determined by Congress until close to, or even after, the winter heating season has begun, and when State and local LIHEAP administrators are unable to plan in advance for the basic level of LIHEAP funds needed in the upcoming year, State and local LIHEAP administrators face difficulties in ensuring that adequate assistance is provided; and

WHEREAS, Congress has funded LIHEAP at the level of \$2.3 billion in FY 2001 including \$855 million in emergency funds released by the President; and

WHEREAS, Congress has funded LIHEAP at the level of \$2.3 billion in FY 2002, including \$600 million in emergency funding available in FY 2002 but not yet released; 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 in its February 2002 Winter Committee Meetings in

Washington D.C., supports continued funding and advanced funding for LIHEAP; and be it further

RESOLVED, That NARUC also urges the President to release to the States the full \$600 million in LIHEAP emergency funding to address additional heating and cooling needs in FY 2002; and be it further

RESOLVED, That NARUC urges the Congress to appropriate adequate LIHEAP funding for FY 2003, in an amount not less than the \$2.3 billion released in FY 2001 and approved by Congress for FY 2002 including emergency funds; and be it further

RESOLVED, That NARUC also urges the Congress to appropriate such funding prior to the commencement of the winter heating season.

Sponsored by the Consumer Affairs Committee

Adopted by the NARUC Board of Directors February 13, 2002