

Resolution on LIHEAP Funding

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 need for energy assistance is growing rapidly during the current recession, at the same time that severe constraints on State budgets and the increased strain on the nation's support system provided by non-profit, faith-based, and other community organizations have limited the resources available for energy assistance; *and*

WHEREAS, The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) provides vital heating and cooling assistance to low-income families, including households with working poor, senior citizens, very young children, and persons with disabilities; *and*

WHEREAS, The U.S. Census recently reported that 43.6 million people were defined as "in poverty" in the United States, or one in seven Americans, the third consecutive annual increase and the largest number in the measure's 50-year recorded history;¹ *and*

WHEREAS, The increasing poverty rate, coupled with underfunding of energy assistance programs, could increase arrearages and service disconnections causing electric and gas utilities to write off increasing levels of revenue due to consumers being unable to pay bills and leave families to resort to unsafe and life-threatening measures in lieu of utility services; *and*

WHEREAS, In Fiscal Year 2009, LIHEAP received a record level of funding at \$5.1 billion and this level of funding was continued in Fiscal Year 2010; *and*

WHEREAS, The aggregate \$5.1 billion funding level in Fiscal Year 2010 has allowed assistance to go to an estimated 8.8 million households, an increase of 1.2 million households, the highest number on record as well as provide a basic grant of about \$456 per household, enough to cover about 47 percent of the cost of home heating; *and*

WHEREAS, The \$5.1 billion provided by Congress has been extremely important as the nation suffers through the worst recession and economic crisis in a generation; *and*

WHEREAS, Certain members of Congress have expressed intentions to reduce funding for LIHEAP. Recognizing concerns regarding the level of federal spending, NARUC believes that economic conditions warrant support of this vital program to the ratepayers we serve; *and*

WHEREAS, Should Congress not maintain this level of LIHEAP funding it 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*

¹ http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/income_wealth/cb10-144.html

RESOLVED, That the Board of Directors of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners, convened at its 2011 Winter Committee Meetings in Washington, D.C., urges Congress to maintain the current level of LIHEAP funding by appropriating for FY 2011 and FY 2012 no less than \$5.1 billion dollars, including release of the FY 2011 contingency funds, and to provide an advance LIHEAP appropriation for FY 2013 of no less than \$5.1 billion.

Sponsored by the Committee on Consumer Affairs

Adopted by the NARUC Board of Directors February 16, 2011