

House Republican Press Release

August 19, 2008  
Press Office: 860-240-8700

**REPUBLICANS PROVIDE MIDDLE CLASS HEATING  
'INSULATION' THIS WINTER**  
*Six-Point Plan: Millions for Fuel Assistance, Small Businesses,  
Conservation*



HARTFORD – Thousands of Connecticut families will not be left out in the cold this winter under an energy assistance plan unveiled today by House and Senate Republicans that directs an additional \$25 million to insulate consumers from the rising costs of home heating oil, help pay electric bills and combat soaring gasoline prices.

Republicans want to use an additional \$9 million of the state surplus to increase the Operation Fuel account to help middle class families earning up to \$94,000 a year. Republicans would add \$5 million to the Energy Conservation Load Management Fund and offer sales tax breaks for small businesses. Republicans will push their agenda this Friday when the legislature meets in special session to enact fuel assistance programs.

“We have the funds available to provide relief for those struggling to heat their homes and businesses, as well as the neediest who are at risk this winter,” House Republican Leader Lawrence F. Cafero Jr., of Norwalk said. “We need to act now.”

Senate Republican John McKinney of Fairfield said, “Energy prices have increased to levels beyond what most families and businesses ever budgeted for. This is the number one issue affecting our economy and how to address this problem in both the short and long-term is one of our state’s most pressing challenges. It is unfortunate that the majority party did not make this a priority during the regular session but I’m pleased that both parties are focused on solutions now. Our proposal will provide relief to the families and small businesses that need it most.”

Under the proposal Republicans would:

- Allow a family of four earning up to \$94,000 a year to qualify for Operation Fuel assistance;
- Increase tax exemptions for small businesses for the first \$500 on electric bills;
- Increase by \$5 million the Conservation Load Management Account that rewards conservation efforts;
- Provide \$3 million to help struggling families pay their electric bills;

- Cap the gross receipts gasoline tax to hedge against future spikes at the gas pump;
- Fill the Special Transportation Fund deficit of \$28 million by using the current Transportation Fund Balance and direct nearly \$100 million of the fund to projects that have stalled due to rising construction costs.

Cafero said the proposals are apart from those expected to be offered by Gov. Rell and other lawmakers during the special session that he expects will draw broad bipartisan support.

“We want to help to thousands of additional Connecticut families who otherwise would not qualify for assistance because of restrictive income levels. By expanding the program we can reach many more families, seniors and small businesses facing skyrocketing fuel costs,” Cafero said.