

House Republican Press Release

October 10, 2007  
Press Office: 860-240-8700

**REP. STRIPP: INACTION JEOPARDIZES ENERGY ASSISTANCE  
FOR MORE THAN 60,000 HOUSEHOLDS**



*"Weston Legislator Criticizes  
Legislative Democrats for Adjourning  
Without Taking Action to Prevent  
Illegal Recipients from Abusing the  
\$47 Million Program"*

HARTFORD- State Representative John Stripp (R- Easton, Redding and Weston) said it is outrageous that leaders of three legislative committees adjourned without allowing action to prevent fraud and abuse in a federally-funded \$47 million home heating oil assistance program.

Rep. Stripp said the program serving 60,000 Connecticut households is in jeopardy if the state continues to allow ineligible recipients to participate in the program.

Rep. Stripp criticized the leadership of the legislature's Appropriations, Human Services and Energy Committees that met yesterday for refusing to allow any action on the federal \$47 million energy assistance block grant program.

At issue, he said, is how Connecticut administers the program and whether Connecticut must require applicants to provide Social Security numbers as a fraud prevention measure.

Stripp said that the Department of Social Services (DSS) can require Community Action Agencies (CAA) that administer the program to request valid Social Security numbers from applicants. Non-verification of applicants and use of false Social Security numbers have spawned an FBI fraud investigation into New Haven's CAA.

Following a whistleblower complaint concerning the CAA in New Haven, Stripp said, an opinion was sought from the state attorney general, Richard Blumenthal, on guidelines for Connecticut's energy assistance program.

"The attorney general's opinion made clear that it was illegal for Connecticut to provide federal energy assistance to nonqualified individuals," said Stripp. "Further, his opinion said the state could require verifiable Social Security numbers from applicants as a fraud prevention measure."

“This is beyond outrageous,” said Rep. Stripp. “Their inaction jeopardizes 60,000 households in the state that vitally need energy assistance this winter.”

He added. “The Democratic leadership has failed to put in place measures that would help insure that illegal aliens not receive the aid. Their inaction leaves a process open to abuse and fraud. “

Stripp said Democratic legislative leaders failed to take action at a meeting two weeks ago so that further information on the attorney general’s opinion could be sought.

“Yesterday, following five hours of discussion and questions, the Democratic majority used a non-debatable parliamentary maneuver to convene and immediately adjourn the three legislative committees without taking any action.”

Rep. Stripp said, “Republicans strongly objected to the abrupt adjournment, noting that proposed changes by the Department of Social Service commissioner to the low income energy assistance (LIHEAP) program were necessary to help prevent fraud and not jeopardize federal funding.”

“Even the attorney general acknowledged that the changes in the program were in fact legal under state and federal law,” said Rep. Stripp.

Attorney General Richard Blumenthal, in his opinion provided to the state DSS, stated that Social Security numbers can be used to verify income. Federal money can be provided only to those residing here legally, the Attorney General’s office said in a previous opinion.

State Rep. John Stripp serves the 135<sup>th</sup> Assembly District of Easton, Redding and Weston in the state House of Representatives.