

Text of Dear Colleague Email

From: Hickling, Chris (Reed)

Subject: Weatherization -- Letter to EWD Conferees

Senators Reed and Snowe are sending the letter below to Chairman Dorgan and Ranking Member Bennett in advance of the Conference Committee for the Energy and Water Development Appropriations bill. **The deadline to sign is the Close of Business on Tuesday, September 8th.**

The letter requests that the overall funding for the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) be no less than \$220 million, and that any pilot projects be funded above that level and not carved out of the base funding.

I've attached a state by state estimate – mentioned in the letter -- showing funding at \$130 million (the Senate language), \$200 million (Senate language if pilot projects are funded outside of the base funding) and \$220 million (amount in the Obama budget).

Let me know if you have any questions.

Chris
4-0606

#####

September XX, 2009

The Honorable Byron L. Dorgan, Chairman
The Honorable Robert F. Bennett, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Dorgan and Ranking Member Bennett,

As you prepare the final version of the fiscal year 2010 Energy and Water Development Appropriations bill, we respectfully request that you include no less than \$220 million for the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP), the level requested by the President. We further ask that this funding not be used to finance new weatherization pilot projects that were not included in the Administration's budget proposal. Rather, such pilot projects should be funded above the President's request, and only funded if they are consistent with the goals of the program.

As you know, the Weatherization Assistance Program is the largest federal effort aimed at improving the energy efficiency of low-income housing. Funding for the program provides savings for families enduring the high energy costs associated with the heat of summer and the cold of winter. The Department of Energy estimates that for every dollar spent on weatherization, \$2.73 is returned in energy and non-energy benefits. Weatherized homes can

save an average of nearly one-third on energy bills. Furthermore, states are leveraging the federal investment – more than \$1.50 for every dollar from the Department of Energy. Despite these successes, more than 40 million low-income housing units are eligible for and in need of weatherization assistance.

Because the Senate bill carves out \$70 million from its \$200 million weatherization appropriation in order to fund two pilot programs, direct assistance to states will be reduced to \$130 million, the lowest level of funding since fiscal year 1998. As the attached sheet shows, every state will lose funding.

We recognize the unprecedented investment in weatherization in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act earlier this year. After years of underfunding, the \$5 billion provided for weatherization was an impressive achievement for which you deserve significant credit. Although Recovery Act funds are flowing to the states, the states are still counting on funding from regular appropriations. Without the sustained investment from regular appropriations, states will be unable to maintain their weatherization programs and the capacity that is being created under the Recovery Act.

Like you, we recognize that it will be challenging in future years to maintain the same level of investment provided in the Recovery Act. We also recognize the pilot projects in the Senate bill were proposed with goal of developing ways to stretch limited resources to weatherize the maximum number of low-income homes. Nonetheless, we believe that in this economic downturn, states need the maximum amount of funds to help a growing number of low-income families needing assistance. The funding carved out for pilot projects could weatherize more than 10,000 low-income housing units.

We are also deeply concerned about investing significant resources in pilot projects that have not been subjected to even minimal scrutiny. In particular, we would call your attention to the pilot project to demonstrate “*energy savings through use of improved insulating and sealing in homes built prior to 1980.*” This project appears to be inconsistent with the goals of the program since it would limit the energy saving and cost-saving options available to low income families and individuals. In contrast to this pilot, WAP promotes the concept of whole house weatherizing, which can include replacing windows, improving heating and air conditioning equipment, and upgrading to more-efficient appliances and hot water heaters. Limiting the “weatherization” under this pilot project to only insulation and sealing does a disservice to these low-income families. Furthermore, under the law, these homes would be ineligible for additional weatherization treatments in the future and would lose out on a lifetime of energy savings. On that basis, we strongly recommend no funding be provided for this pilot project.

Again, we thank you for your commitment to the Weatherization Assistance Program and look forward to working with you to ensure that the greatest number of low-income homes can be served under this program.

Sincerely,