



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Malcolm Smith

## Senate Democrats Release Comprehensive Energy Plan

MALCOLM A. SMITH August 6, 2008



*Proposal to expand energy programs to help low-income and middle-class families with heating and weatherization aid of \$4800 or more*

(Albany, NY) –Thursday, August 7, 2008 – To respond to skyrocketing home energy costs and help alleviate financial burdens on renters and homeowners, Senate Democrats released a comprehensive energy relief plan today calling on the Republican-led majority to pass the proposed legislation.

State Senator Kevin Parker (D-Brooklyn), the ranking Democrat on the Senate Energy Committee is calling for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Energy Policy for New York with increased reliance on renewable energy sources including wind and hydropower and a new “super efficient” energy grid, he said.

“We need more clean and affordable energy choices in New York State”, said Senator Kevin Parker. “Families – low-income and middle-class – need immediate help with their heating bills this winter. And we need to make large-scale investments in cost-effective weatherization improvements that will lower energy bills and improve our environment.”

The home heating and energy package includes:

- Create a new Middle-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (MIHEAP) which would provide emergency heating bill assistance to middle-class families making up to \$85,000 per year
- Expansion of the existing Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) by doubling the average benefit for the 2008-09 winter heating season for families making up to \$45,000 per year
- A large-scale investment in home weatherization improvements that will save families up to 40 percent on energy costs and create tens of thousands of new green jobs

Senator William Stachowski (D-Buffalo) said: “Upstate families need this help, both the immediate help with heating bills and long-term help with weatherization that will save money over the long term. With heating oil prices up 75 percent or more, we’ve got to act now.”

Taxpayers would ultimately benefit by funding new energy efficiencies through the state tax-exempt financing for weatherization improvements, Stachowski said.

Senator Ruth Hassell-Thompson (D-Bronx), ranking member of the Senate Consumer Protection Committee, said: “We know that families need fast help now and we know that quality weatherization improvements can cut up to 40 percent from the cost of home energy. Our plan is sound public policy. Within this policy we will reduce the use of fossil fuel and create a greener, more efficient method of

home energy usage. It's the right time to take strong action."

Recently, Senate Democratic Leader Malcolm A. Smith (D-St. Albans) travelled to the nation's capital and met with U.S. Senators Charles Schumer and Hillary Clinton, both democrats from New York, to discuss elements of an economic stimulus package for New York, including additional Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) funding.

Senator Smith said: "The Senate Republicans continue to push energy policies that are inefficient and fiscally unproductive. Governor Paterson has called on the legislature and state agencies to make budget cuts. We have to be fiscally responsible and the package my Democratic colleagues are pushing for not only addresses the energy crisis but it funds itself. I urge my colleagues across the aisle to join us in moving this bill forward because New York cannot wait any longer."

Senate Democrats have lent their support to Democratic Presidential frontrunner Barack Obama's "New Energy for America" plan that would impose a windfall profits tax on oil companies to fund immediate tax rebates of \$500 for individuals and \$1000 for families and long-term investments in clean energy. Together these steps could subsequently create five million new "green jobs" and end our reliance on foreign oil.

Senator Darrel Aubertine (D-Cape Vincent) said: "This is a serious problem, especially with our winters. For lower income families and people on fixed incomes, the cost will either push them further into debt or worse, leave them to choose between heat and food. Others will break out old wood stoves and retrofit them to their homes, or use space heaters there by increasing the chances of a tragic accident. By helping people pay their bills, we may even save some lives."

Dan Cantor, Working Families Party Executive Director, said: "With the cost of fuel skyrocketing, New Yorkers already struggling with the weak economy will need relief from the high costs of heating their homes this winter. But they'll also need it next winter and the winter after that -- we need to think big. By greening New York's homes, we can greatly reduce energy costs for millions of working families and create tens of thousands of family-supporting jobs to jumpstart the economy."

Senator Parker concluded: "Americans are consuming six times more energy than the average person anywhere else in the world. These immediate actions, linked to the development of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Energy Policy for New York that includes ramped up development of renewable energy, such as wind, solar and

hydroelectric power will help address the state's growing need for clean and affordable power.”