



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Martin J. Golden

Governor Paterson Urges President Obama to Release Home Heating Assistance Funds

MARTIN J. GOLDEN January 20, 2010

ALBANY, NY - Governor David A. Paterson today called on President Barack Obama to release \$590 million in home heating assistance funds to help families cope with cold winter temperatures blanketing the country. The Governor made the appeal at a time when more New Yorkers are in need of additional funds to help keep their households warm this winter season. Earlier this month, Governor Paterson joined the other governors in the Coalition of Northeastern Governors (CONEG), to send a letter to President Obama, requesting that the assistance be released in order to incorporate the funds into this year's program.

"We all know a family struggling to get by – those who are recently unemployed, others whose pay has been cut or work hours reduced. At this time of great need, we must provide critical services that will assist our working families through these difficult times," Governor Paterson said. "More New Yorkers have requested heating assistance this year than last – which is why it is crucial that we put these funds to work soon. HEAP makes sure that our neighbors have the funding they need to keep their homes heated through the frigid winter season."

Demand is already up by 15 percent in the first two months of this Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) season, which began on November 2, and more than 1.1 million HEAP benefits have already been authorized. With the price of home heating oil in New York up by more than 13 percent compared to this

time last year, more families are struggling, and turning to HEAP to help keep their homes warm.

This season, the maximum regular HEAP benefit a household can receive is \$700. In addition, a family of four with annual household income of as much as \$46,837 could be eligible for a HEAP regular benefit this year, up from \$45,312 last year. New York issued more than 1.5 million HEAP benefits last year, an all-time high.

New York has been allocated \$475 million in Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) formula funds this winter, the same as last year. When LIHEAP contingency funds were released to the states last winter, New York received just over \$62 million of the \$590 million available. The President decides whether to release LIHEAP contingency funds and also determines the amount of funding each state will receive.

Eligible households in New York can receive one regular HEAP benefit per season and could also be eligible for an emergency benefit if they are in impending danger of running out of fuel or having their utility services shut off and lack the resources to resolve the emergency.

The HEAP program is supervised by the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance. New Yorkers can check to see if they may be eligible for HEAP, and a host of other benefits, by answering a few, simple questions quickly and anonymously online at www.myBenefits.ny.gov.