

The Vermont congressional delegation – Sens. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) and Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and Rep. Peter Welch (D-Vt.) – will hold a press conference in Burlington on Monday when President Obama will send Congress a budget which reportedly will propose to cut in half federal funding for home heating assistance.

The delegation led an effort in Congress that doubled funding for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program to \$5.1 billion a year since 2008. The program provides critical heating assistance for senior citizens, persons with disabilities, and low-income families with children. In December, the Vermont delegation also successfully fought efforts in Congress to cut LIHEAP.

"We are very concerned about reports that the president's budget will propose a 50 percent cut to the program that helps more than 20,000 Vermont households," the Vermont lawmakers said in a joint statement.

"Vermonters today are paying nearly \$3.50 a gallon on average for heating oil, up more than 70 cents a gallon from last year. At the same time, the average LIHEAP grant for Vermonters is less than it was last year. In other words, Vermonters on fixed incomes are spending more to heat their homes with even less disposable income. With Vermont families still recovering from the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, the last thing we should be doing is making it harder for the most vulnerable people in this country to stay warm in the winter.

"While we all believe that we need to reduce the federal deficit, we cannot balance the budget on the backs of senior citizens on fixed incomes, low-income families with children, and persons with disabilities. This is especially true after Congress voted to provide billions of dollars in tax breaks for the wealthiest Americans."