

Working with House colleagues from the Northeast, Rep. Peter Welch today announced legislation to restore funding to the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) to at least last year's level of \$4.7 billion.

President Obama's proposed LIHEAP funding level for FY2012 would reduce the average benefit to Vermont recipients by nearly \$500. In FY2011, the average benefit to Vermont recipients was \$866.

"LIHEAP is a critical lifeline for Vermonters in need," Welch said. "With a tough economy and many Vermonters still struggling to recover from Tropical Storm Irene, the need for assistance is growing. This is clearly not the time to slash benefits to Vermonters struggling to hang on."

With increased fuel costs a major driver of the need for LIHEAP assistance, Welch is also working to stem the rising cost of home heating fuel. Last week, [he introduced legislation](#) that would give the Commodities Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) resources to crack down on energy market speculators. According to Goldman Sachs, market speculation activity adds at least \$20 to the price of a barrel of oil.

THE LIHEAP Protection Act (H.R. 3626) announced today by Welch is cosponsored in the House by Reps. Chellie Pingree (D-Maine), Mike Michaud (D-Maine), David Cicilline (D-R.I.), Jim Langevin (D-R.I.) and Edward Markey (D-Mass.). Sen. Bernie Sanders has introduced companion legislation in the Senate.