Vermont's congressional delegation – U.S. Sens. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) and Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and Rep. Peter Welch (D-Vt.) – announced today the release of $4.9 million for Vermont under the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

The latest allotment released by the U.S. Department on Health and Human Services brings Vermont's total this year to $19.5 million this winter, down from $26 million in 2010. The state of Vermont has committed $6.1 million to help make up the difference.

Sanders, Leahy and Welch are cosponsors of legislation to provide additional funding for LIHEAP to at least match last year's total of $4.7 billion nationwide and $26 million for Vermont. Sanders and Leahy have called on Senate leadership to bring up the measure as soon as Congress reconvenes in January.

The 2011 spending package Congress approved in December included only $3.5 billion for the home Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, a cut of $1.2 billion from last year.