

## Headlines:

Congress adopted, and the President signed, a massive stimulus package that includes as much as \$100 billion in direct and indirect investments in green energy.

# NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF BLACK MAYORS

## SPECIAL REPORT



# Energy

Issue 2

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## Bassett Leads National Agenda for Affordable Energy; Jones Ushers Green Jobs Into Annual Convention and Beyond



Daryl Bassett, national spokesperson for EmPower Consumers and former Arkansas Public Service Commissioner, and Van Jones, founding president of Green for All and current Special Advisor for Green Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation at the White House Council on Environmental Quality; two men traveling down different roads to the same path; an affordable green tomorrow.

EmPower Consumers, a national non-profit organization, was formed by consumers to ensure policy makers and companies consider the

impact new energy policies have on consumer electric bills, particularly those of the working middle class, minorities and the economically disadvantaged.

Bassett, participant at the NCBM Legislative Policy Session, says, "For the past 2 ½ years, EmPower Consumers has advocated on behalf of hard-working people with good jobs who could barely make ends meet. And, for the last year and a half, we have witnessed many of these very same people become unemployed while their cost of living and energy costs

have continued to rise. These hard working families can not carry the burden of high energy costs; something must be done." "Frankly, while we support the Green Job's initiatives, we believe the real key is responsible energy laws which lower electric bills."

Van Jones, scheduled keynote speaker at the '09 NCBM Annual Convention, started Green For All on January 1, 2008 and as part of the Clean Energy Corps Working Group, launched a campaign for a Clean Energy Corps initiative which would go

on to create 600,000 "green-collar" jobs while retrofitting and upgrading more than 15 million American buildings.

Merging his old and new roles together Jones is spearheading an economic stimulus plan designed to prepare workers for careers in energy efficiency and renewable energy fields in the form of "Green Jobs", an initiative both men agree on will drastically improve America's energy crisis.

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## NCBM Goes To The Hill

On March 17th, the National Conference of Black Mayors convened its 2009 Legislative Policy Summit at the U.S. Capitol, gathering more than 150 member mayors and partners. The day's agenda of policy presentations was interspersed with remarks from representatives of various U.S. Departments and key federal agencies that included the Census Bureau, Dept. of Labor, Dept. of Commerce and the FCC.

"NCBM mayors will be the leaders in the effective implementation of stimulus funding. When you give us opportunity and dollars, we know where to put it and how to put it to work in our communities," said NCBM President Mayor Heather Hudson of Greenville, Mississippi.

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## NCBM's 7 Guiding Principles for Federal Energy Policy

- 1. Energy Affordability** – Lawmakers must ensure new laws do not unreasonably increase the cost of energy for moderate and low income families.
- 2. Prohibit Wealth Redistribution** – Lawmakers must ensure the new laws do not place the cost of new energy policies on individual states or regions. The burden must be distributed evenly across the country..
- 3. Prohibit Regressive Taxation** – Lawmakers must

ensure that new energy policies do not place the costs of addressing carbon emissions on the backs of moderate and low income minority households.

- 4. Cost Containment** – Lawmakers must ensure that new energy laws are developed in a manner that minimizes the impact of the cost of compliance with carbon on moderate and low income households.
- 5. Low Income Assistance** – Lawmakers must ensure LIHEAP is expanded and is effectively implemented to reach the neediest households expeditiously.
- 6. Individual Needs** – Lawmakers must ensure the communities with the greatest needs are provided the new Green Jobs.
- 7. Balance Environment and Economy** – Lawmakers must ensure the new energy laws balance environmental improvements with economic development.

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## Impact Of Rising Energy Costs On Minority Households

- After paying federal and state taxes, the average African-American family had an estimated income of \$35,949 compared to \$38,252 for all Hispanic families and \$54,125 for white households.
- African-American and Hispanic households with annual pre-tax incomes below \$50,000 spent roughly 24% of their after-tax income on energy. African Americans and Hispanics household with annual pre-tax between \$10,000 and \$30,000, energy expenditures spent 26 percent of average after-tax incomes on energy.

Minority families can not afford the increasing cost of energy.

See Chart 1-A

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## Next Steps

As the nation moves toward economic recovery we must ensure that our constituents are not left at the back of bus.

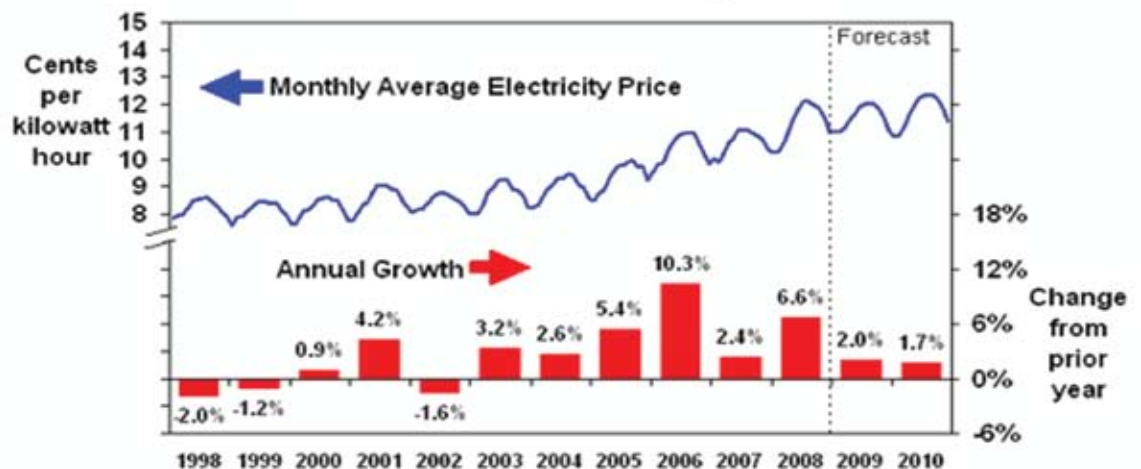
Together we have the power to make a difference in the lives of millions and affect not only the lives of those in our communities today, but for generations to come. This is why going forward the National Conference of Black Mayors will be closely following and monitoring RPS, Green Jobs, LIHEAP and all components of the Federal Energy Policy equation to ensure that the solution is one that is positive for our communities.



NCBM Executive Director  
Vanessa R. Williams

Chart 1-A

### U.S. Residential Electricity Price



# National Conference of Black Mayors Encouraged By Expansion Of LIHEAP And Weatherization Assistance Programs



## LIHEAP

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) helps pay the winter heating bills or summer cooling bills of low-income and elderly people. During extreme weather conditions, people living in poverty and low-income elderly should not have to choose between buying fuel to heat or cool their homes and buying food for themselves and their families.

Since two-thirds of the families receiving LIHEAP assistance have incomes of less than \$8,000 a year, the program clearly helps the people who need help the most.

Funding is distributed to each of the fifty states, U.S. territories and tribal governments through the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Administration of

the program is left up to state, territorial or tribal governments. Congress also provides the U.S. President with limited contingency funds each year, which are reserved for emergency situations and released at the President's discretion.

HR 2638, the Consolidated Security, Disaster Assistance, and Continuing Appropriations Act, 2009, was signed by President Bush on September 30, providing FY 2009 LIHEAP funding of \$5.1 billion, the highest in the program's history and nearly double FY 2008 funding of \$2.6 billion.

\$4.509 billion was distributed through the regular block grant program and \$590 million was distributed as emergency contingency funds.

LIHEAP applicants must have an income less than 150% of federal poverty level or 60% of state median poverty level

to be eligible, however some states have expanded their programs to include more households (for example, in Massachusetts, applicants must be within 200% of the federal poverty level).

In most states, the program is run on a first come-first served basis. This typically results in a rush to apply and receive assistance, because once the funding pool is empty most energy assistance offices close their doors. In some states, the legislature or governor may make a politically popular gesture of extending eligibility to additional individuals through an emergency bill or executive order, even though this may result in funds being claimed earlier in the winter season.

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## WAP

The Act also provided \$477.2 million in funding for the Weatherization Assistance Program, in which contractors are sent to residences to make physical changes to help retain heat or install

more fuel-efficient furnaces, this is compared to \$227.2 million for FY 2008. The WAP also received \$5 billion under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act in February. Occasionally, acceptance of the weatherization process is mandatory with approval for LIHEAP assistance.

The Community Services Block Grant received \$1 billion under the stimulus bill, as well as \$700 million through the regular appropriations process.

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## For More Information

The LIHEAP Clearinghouse provides free telephone and e-mail referrals to people who want to know where to apply for low-income energy assistance. Those seeking help can call the National Energy Assistance Referral (NEAR) project toll-free at 1-866-674-6327 from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. (Eastern Time) or email NEAR at [energyassistance@ncat.org](mailto:energyassistance@ncat.org).

