



Winter 2009

Dear Friend:

Home heating costs are higher than ever and staying warm this winter may be difficult, particularly for seniors on a fixed income. Pennsylvania has a number of programs to provide financial assistance for those who are having difficulty paying their heating bills and weatherization expenses. There are also things you can do to reduce your energy bills significantly. This newsletter provides you with information on how to be protected from the cold and where to go if you need assistance.

Senator "Tommy" Tomlinson

## Tips to Save Energy This Winter

Pennsylvania's businesses and families can play a role in reducing energy prices by increasing energy efficiency. Our most accessible source of additional energy is the energy we now waste. Adopting some simple efficiency measures in our homes and businesses can help conserve energy and save money. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection has some simple steps citizens can take to make a real difference in their energy bills each month. They include:

- Set your thermostat comfortably low in the winter and comfortably high in the summer. Install a programmable thermostat that is compatible with your heating and cooling system.
- Use compact fluorescent light bulbs.
- Air dry dishes instead of using your dishwasher's drying cycle.
- Turn off your computer and monitor when not in use.

- Plug home electronics, such as TVs and DVD players, into power strips; turn the power strips off when the equipment is not in use (TVs and DVDs in standby mode still use several watts of power).
- Lower the thermostat on your hot water heater to 120° F.
- Take short showers instead of baths.
- Wash only full loads of dishes and clothes.
- Drive sensibly. Aggressive driving (speeding, rapid acceleration and braking) wastes gasoline.

Look for the **ENERGY STAR®** label on home appliances and products.



**ENERGY STAR®** products meet strict efficiency guidelines set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy.

## Sign Up Now For My eNewsletter

In an effort to be more environmentally friendly, I encourage you to sign up for my eNewsletter. If you would like to receive up-to-date information on state services, legislative information and district news, please visit my website at [senatortomlinson.com](http://senatortomlinson.com) and register your email address. You will receive regular alerts on state programs and services, local projects and events and legislative issues.

## Pennsylvania Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

The Pennsylvania Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) helps low income people pay their heating bills through energy assistance grants. People need not have an unpaid bill or be on welfare to receive energy assistance. Additional money of up to \$800 is available to individuals if they have an emergency situation and are in jeopardy of losing their heat. Emergency situations include:

- broken heating equipment or leaking lines that must be fixed or replaced
- lack of fuel
- termination of utility service
- danger of being without fuel or of having utility service terminated

Assistance with energy emergency situations is available 24

hours a day. For more information, contact the Bucks County Assistance Office at 215-781-3300 or toll free at 1-800-362-1291, or LIHEAP at 215-781-3393 or toll free at 1-800-616-6481.

To apply, you will need the following:

- Names of people in the household
- Dates of birth for all household members
- Social Security numbers for all household members
- Proof of income for all household members
- A copy of a recent heating bill



## Who is Eligible

In 2006, the Pennsylvania General Assembly raised the eligibility income from 135% to 150% of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines. If you have questions about LIHEAP, you may call your County Assistance Office or the toll-free LIHEAP hotline at 1-866-857-7095 (individuals with hearing impairments may call the TDD number at 1-800-451-5886). You may be eligible for other energy assistance programs for low income households in addition to the LIHEAP program. Visit the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission website at [www.puc.state.pa.us](http://www.puc.state.pa.us) for information on energy programs available for low income households. You can also visit the \$1 Energy Fund website at [www.dollarenergy.org](http://www.dollarenergy.org) or contact your utility company for information on programs that may help you pay your utility bill.

## What to Do if You Can't Pay Your Bill

Consumers who do not have utility service should know their rights and obtain information about programs available to help them restore and maintain utility service. Consumers with a seriously ill resident in the household or a protection from abuse order may have additional options for service restoration.

Consumers should call their utility first to try to make arrangements to pay their bill.

If you are unable to reach an agreement with the utility, the Public Utility Commission may be able to provide assistance. The PUC can be reached toll free at 1-800-692-7380.

If your utility service was disconnected because you did not pay your bill, you should:

- Contact the utility company immediately and make payment arrangements so that your service can be restored as quickly as possible.
- Ask to be placed on a "budget plan," which helps to balance your energy costs throughout the year. Each monthly bill will be the same amount.
- Ask if you qualify for help under assistance programs that may be offered, such as the \$1 Energy Fund or other "hardship" funds.

If you are an older adult who is without heat, contact your local Area Agency on Aging and ask if emergency shelter is available.



## Senator Robert M. Tomlinson

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