



National Association for State Community Services Programs

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President's Budget Puts Working Poor Out in the Cold

Washington, DC – In a complete reversal of the Administration's ten-year commitment to the Weatherization Assistance Program, outlined in the 2000 National Energy Policy, the President has called for a \$78 million, or a 33 percent, reduction in funding for 2007. This unwarranted reduction will force states to deny much needed energy efficiency services to more than 33,000 low-income, elderly and working poor families next year. In fact, the President only provided approximately 26 percent of what he committed to do in 2000.

“At a time when the plight of low-income families is at its greatest, the President's 2007 Budget reveals a startling fact – these families will receive less help and will surely be worse for the reordering of Administration priorities in the area of energy efficiency,” stated Connie Greer, Board Chair for the National Association for State Community Services Programs, the group in Washington that represents the states' Weatherization Assistance Program managers. Ms. Greer went on to say that, “Unfortunately, President Bush has realigned the priorities of the Department of Energy to reflect higher investments in research and development at the expense of the poor families who can't afford to maintain and heat or cool their homes today.”

After Weatherization services are provided, the average family saves about \$400 per year (based on current energy prices). The effect of these efficiency services (like insulation, furnace replacement, air infiltration reduction, etc.) lasts more than 15 years in most cases. This means that each family could save more than \$6,000 over the life of the services installed with a modest national average investment of only \$2,900 per home. The 33,000 families who will be denied this year will have to spend an additional \$198 million from their meager incomes to pay for energy that could have been saved if the homes were weatherized in 2007.

NASCSP recognizes the importance of investments in the future and we applaud the President's foresight in helping the country reduce its dependence on foreign oil. But as Ms. Greer suggested, “It is unlikely that these families will soon be purchasing hybrid vehicles or reap any economic benefit from cleaner electricity technologies or be able to use hydrogen and fuel cell technology to help put food on their tables and keep them warm this year or next. Surely the President can't have forgotten the problem staring him in the face – poor families need help now!” If the President feels so strongly about this issue, then the Department of Energy's budget should have been increased to allow for this investment. The money should not have been taken from the pockets of poor families in America least able to pay the bill.

To date, the President has fallen well short of his original commitment to the Weatherization Program, having only delivered about 26 percent of what he promised to low-income families in 2000. Last year, Congress established an authorization level of \$600 million for the Weatherization Program in 2007 as part of the Energy Policy Act signed into law by the President. The National Association for State Community Services Programs and its state members will ask Congress to reject the President's current 2007 request to reduce funding for the Weatherization Assistance Program. The Association will join with other national organizations to help move the 2007 appropriations back in line with the President's original commitment to this Program. For more information about the Weatherization Assistance Program please visit www.nascsp.org or www.waptac.org.

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