

New Brunswick - Congressman Frank Pallone, Jr. and Congressman Rush Holt joined with community administrators and participants in the federal program that provides heating assistance to low-income families to talk about the increased importance of the program during the tough economy, a cold winter and the threat of cuts by the new Republican majority in the House. The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program has provided close to \$4 billion to those in need, making \$175 million available to New Jersey.

"LIHEAP is a vital program of tens of thousands of New Jerseyans struggling to make ends meet. Unfortunately, even in this tough economy, funding for this critical program is in danger as the new House majority prepares to make good on their proposed draconian budget cuts. These cuts would have a real impact on real people – our friends and neighbors. Rep. Pallone and I are committed to ensuring that we continue to invest in LIHEAP and the Puerto Rican Action Board can continue to support residents in Middlesex County," Holt said.

"Heating assistance takes on greater importance during these difficult economic times and harsh winter conditions," said Pallone. "Low-income families are the first to get pushed into poverty during a recession and are the most vulnerable to the loss of heat for their homes. For the very young, the elderly and the sick, these vulnerabilities can be dangerous."

Congressman Pallone also warned of the threat posed to the LIHEAP program by the new Republican majority in the House of Representatives, whose threats to cut most domestic spending puts the program in peril.

LIHEAP assists qualified families with their home energy needs such as heating in the winter, cooling their homes in the summer, and insulating their homes to make them more energy efficient and reduce their energy costs. By doing so, families are less likely to have to choose between paying their energy bills and other necessities, such as food or medicine. Energy assistance can reduce illness or the risk of fires that can break out when households turn to using candles or space heaters because they cannot pay their electricity or gas bill.

The LIHEAP program in Middlesex County is managed by the Puerto Rican Action Board in New Brunswick. In 2008, close to 10,000 families participated. By 2010, the number increased to almost 13,000 families. For this heating season, which has 3 1/2 months remaining, the PRAB expects to help close to 16,000 families.

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