



State of New Jersey

Department of the Treasury

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CORZINE ADMINISTRATION PROVIDES RELIEF TO LOW-INCOME FAMILIES DURING WINTER MONTHS

(TRENTON) – The Corzine Administration today announced that New Jersey is donating \$1.3 million to help disadvantaged residents pay their gas and electric bills during the winter months.

“No one should have to choose between staying safe and warm and emptying their wallets” Corzine said. “This money will go a long way to help New Jersey seniors, disabled citizens and families in need stay warm this winter.”

The state Division of Taxation is giving \$1.3 million from a special utility trust fund to NJ SHARES, a non-profit corporation designated by the Board of Public Utilities (BPU) to provide energy assistance to qualified applicants.

New Jersey SHARES helps residents that are not eligible for any other type of public assistance, who have suffered a temporary financial crisis, often due to unforeseen circumstances such as job loss or illness. Applicants must demonstrate a temporary financial need and a history of good-faith payments to their energy provider.

“Winter in New Jersey without electricity or natural gas is truly unbearable,” said NJ SHARES Executive Director Jim Jacob. “Yet many of our neighbors are forced to choose between heating and eating. Governor Corzine’s support for New Jersey SHARES helps us to avert this disaster for thousands of New Jersey families.”

The special fund, maintained by the state Office of Unclaimed Property, contains money turned over to the state by utility companies and comes from deposits made by customers but never collected by them when they move residences.

State Treasurer Bradley Abelow said the \$1.3 million donation represents 75 percent of the special fund's balance this fiscal year. The remainder is being kept in reserve to pay unclaimed property claims.

"We are pleased to be able to use the proceeds from this fund for a worthy cause that benefits people throughout our state," Treasurer Abelow said.

In addition to what it collects from utilities, the fund is augmented each year by tax deductible donations from the public, Treasurer Abelow noted.

Information on NJ SHARES programs and eligibility requirements can be found by going to the NJ SHARES web site at www.njshares.org or by calling 1-866-NJSHARES.

In addition to this temporary assistance, for those households not eligible for NJ SHARES, New Jersey's Department of Community Affairs provides ongoing financial assistance through the LIHEAP and USF programs to income eligible New Jersey residents who need help paying their utility bills throughout the year. Applications are available at participating community-based organizations. For information on eligibility and the locations of the participating agencies, please call 609-633-6200, or log on to <http://www.nj.gov/dca/dcr/wap/index.shtml>.

"There is help available for New Jersey families and seniors who do not have the financial resources to pay their utility bills but, unfortunately, only 40% of those eligible have applied in the past," said Department of Community Affairs Commissioner Susan Bass Levin. "Sometimes government programs can seem complicated and we want New Jersey residents to know that it is easy to apply and get assistance to keep our households warm. Seniors receiving Lifeline, and income eligible families, should call today or go on-line to make sure that this winter they can stay warm inside."

LIHEAP (the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program) is a federally funded program that provides financial assistance to low-income households to help pay their winter heating bills, including home heating oil, natural gas, electric heating, propane and kerosene.

Already this winter, over 85,000 families and individuals have received more than \$27.5 million in LIHEAP assistance payments.

The Universal Service Fund (USF) is funded through the BPU to help low-income households pay for electric and natural gas service. Eligible applicants complete one application for both the USF and LIHEAP programs.

To develop future energy affordability for income eligible households, the BPU offers an innovative program in concert with NJ's utilities-Comfort Partners. This Program puts the power in residents' hands by partnering with NJ residents to carry out a household energy savings Action Plan. Program participants receive direct installation of energy efficiency measures, personalized customer energy education and counseling, all of

which are provided free of charge. The Comfort Partners Program is available to any New Jersey household with significant electric use, having an income at or below 175% of the federal poverty guidelines.

For more information on how to apply for Comfort Partners, visit http://www.njcleanenergy.com/html/residential/4_comfort_partners.html.

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