

THE CILLEY REPORT

NEWS FROM SENATOR CILLEY

Issue 3 September 2008

Dear Friends and Neighbors:

The warmth of summer is now giving way to the crisp, cool air of autumn. Although most of us look forward to the distinctive beauty of our fall leaves here in New Hampshire, the coming cold weather brings with it new concerns for our citizens this year.

Since the NH Senate session ended in May, my primary focus has been on energy and human services issues. I have conducted two District 6 meetings with service providers, participated in similar meetings around the state, attended an emergency energy workshop sponsored by the National Consumer Law Center, and traveled to New Jersey to a conference sponsored by the Council of State Governments that included work on the home heating crisis. Several key points have come of these meetings:

- We will face unprecedented demands for more home heating assistance in the months to come.
- The double- and triple-digit fuel increases are being exacerbated by similar increases in food, prescription reimbursements for our elderly, and other necessities.
- The mortgage crisis places additional burdens on our citizens and our communities.



Perhaps the most obvious result of these meetings, underscored again and again, is that we see no quick, simplistic solution to the problems that lay ahead. Additionally, given the state of the economy, we cannot count on an infusion of funding to solve the inter-related problems facing our citizens. However, a number of steps can be taken in the short-term to reduce or alleviate some of the discomfort that will be experienced and longer term solutions are on the horizon.

The legislature will meet for a special session on September 24th and I expect home heating assistance to be addressed more fully at that time. Additionally, our federal delegation is pressing for more low-income heating assistance (LIHEAP). I detail within these pages several steps we can take by working together. These include submitting applications to our Community Action Program offices for home heating assistance immediately, reviewing Medicare Part D plans before the open enrollment period beginning in November, and working to keep our food pantries stocked.

I will continue to focus my energies in the coming months on finding relief for our citizens and working with local officials to develop programs to address these needs. If you have suggestions or want to help in any way, please call my office at 271-3045.

Jackie

Winter Heating and Weatherization Plan

The following information was released just as we went to press with this newsletter. The Governor's Office in cooperation with the New Hampshire Legislature has developed a "first step" toward assisting our citizens in the upcoming winter. This process is just unfolding and is likely to be adapted as the full range of needs becomes evident. The following, however, is what the Legislature will be working on during the special session on September 24.

The New Hampshire Winter Heating and Weatherization Plan is a multi-faceted strategy to address the high cost of home heating fuel and help to keep New Hampshire families warm this winter.

Legislation

- Transfer \$10 million from funds not otherwise appropriated, which will augment New Hampshire's expected federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. New Hampshire expects about \$27.5 million in LIHEAP funding. State funds will be repaid by any supplemental federal LIHEAP appropriations received this year above the expected funding of \$27.5 million.
- Transfer \$1.2 million from funds not otherwise appropriated will accelerate the state's current weatherization efforts. The funds will be repaid in December through proceeds from the first Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative Auction. State law provides for at least 10 percent of RGGI auction proceeds to be used for low income programs.
- Utilize \$860,000 from existing energy efficiency programs managed by the PUC in an effort to accelerate income-eligible weatherization programs for this year.
- A public information hearing regarding the special legislation will be held on Tuesday, September 23. The Legislature will act on the special legislation on Wednesday, September 24.

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Heat Safely This Winter!!

There have been reports lately of individuals cutting or taking (i.e. from the recent tornado damaged areas around Epping and Barnstead) "green" wood to burn for heating their homes. There have also been reports of unscrupulous wood suppliers selling green wood.

Burning green wood poses a number of hazards, one of the most dangerous is the rapid build-up of creosote in chimneys. Creosote is flammable and has been the cause of numerous chimney and subsequent house fires in the past. Only seasoned wood should be burned for heating purposes.

Other home heating hazards that have cost lives in the past and pose a danger in the upcoming winter are kerosene space heaters that are not used in properly vented areas.

If you plan to heat with an alternative energy source this winter, please contact your local fire chief to determine how to do this safely for the protection of you and your family.

We are so impressed with Senator Cilley's thoroughness, her willingness to ask us for our input, her ability to really listen to our concerns and her conviction to work hard to keep the needs of the people foremost and forefront." - Charlene Andersen & Cheryl Smith



Senator Cilley at the Tri Chamber breakfast speaking about opportunities for small businesses in challenging economic times.

Our Food Pantries Need Your Help

Local food pantries as well as the NH Food Bank are reporting unprecedented need and equally unpredicted shortfalls of donations even before the cold weather sets in. Our food pantries are part of a vital safety net that offers some relief to families struggling to meet the rising costs of fuel, food, and other basic necessities. However, as we enter the fall our pantries are woefully under stocked and are seeking donations to meet the increased needs of our citizens.

A recent article by John Quinn in Foster's Daily Democrat notes "Food pantries across the state are having trouble keeping shelves stocked and the town's cupboards are no exception—they're almost bare....The problem is systemic in pantries across the state, according to Melanie Gosselin, executive director of the N.H. Food Bank in Manchester...Gosselin said donations are down about 40 percent, while demand has risen about 40 percent since last year." The article also noted that while pantries are in need of donations of all kinds, they are especially looking for items containing high levels of protein such as tuna, beans, and peanut butter.

Traditionally, large grocers across the state have donated substantial quantities of foods to our pantries. While they are still making significant contributions, the quantity of food donated has decreased as grocers work to manage their own stocks more efficiently.

We can all help in this effort. If it fits your budget, please plan to pick up a few additional basic food items – cereal, peanut butter, canned tuna or other fish, vegetables, pasta, rice, etc. – during your normal grocery shopping and drop these off at your local pantry. A list of pantry locations is included below. If we work together we can get our pantries back to fully stocked condition and we will need to be consistent to keep it that way through the coming months. With family budgets being eroded by higher gas prices, home heating prices, the cost of food and other basic necessities, a far higher number this year will turn to our pantries to help make ends meet.

Senator Cilley is working on programs that will assist in obtaining donations to our food pantries and is planning several events to raise awareness of this

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STOP Before Enrolling in Medicare Part D

Our elderly citizens on fixed incomes will be especially hard hit this winter. We are currently working on programs that will help to alert us to seniors who are in need of specific, immediate and/or emergency assistance.

There is one area, however, that we can and must take proactive measures to relieve some of the financial burden on seniors. If you or anyone you know is on Medicare Part D, the new enrollment period will be held from November 15 to December 31, 2008. During this period, Medicare beneficiaries who do not have a Part D plan can enroll in one, and those who do have coverage can change plans. *Beneficiaries who take no action will remain in their current plan, with some exceptions for those who receive the low-income subsidy.* However, since plans may change their formularies (list of covered drugs), tiers, utilization management tools, exceptions and appeals processes, and other aspects of their Part D plans, even beneficiaries who were satisfied with their plan in 2007 need to review their options.

“...we discovered that seniors may be spending hundreds, if not thousands, of unnecessary dollars on prescription medications....”

In speaking with service providers such as Service Link and AARP we discovered that seniors may be spending hundreds, if not thousands, of unnecessary dollars on prescription medications. The Medicare Part D plans often change from one year to the next. Additionally, once an individual enrolls in one of the available plans (or does not make it clear that they wish to switch plans during open enrollment), she or he must wait until the next enrollment period to switch to another plan. Consequently, many participants may find that by staying with the same plan that they have had in the past that their prescription medications are costing considerably more out of pocket and/or may have been dropped from the preferred list.

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I'm happy to know that Jackie is available to help people. She is out there trying to serve all the people and not just with political situations she is out there to help all the people with problems. She acted immediately to help us, and her office was great about keeping us informed and getting back to us.—Lucille Grippo, Nottingham

Winter Heating and Weatherization

Weatherization

The additional funding provided in the special legislation will allow the state to pursue an aggressive weatherization program. The state will partner with the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, Community Action Agencies and non-profit volunteer organizations to expand the state's existing efforts.

“These measures can result in a reduction of energy usage, saving homeowners on their energy bills.”

- The increase in funding will increase the scope of the state's existing weatherization program. The additional services will include installing plastic window coverings, water heat wraps, shutting storm windows, removing AC units, installing fluorescent light bulbs, air sealing, insulation and the installation of programmable thermostats. These measures can result in a reduction of energy usage, saving homeowners on their energy bills.

Information Portal

All resources and information regarding the state's efforts and other available services will be available at www.staywarmnh.org. A link from the state's homepage, www.nh.gov, will also direct visitors to the comprehensive site.



Senator Cilley speaking with the BK Club 101 along with Carol Shea-Porter on September 3, 2008.

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Our Food Panty Needs Your Help Cont'd.

important issue. If you would like to help in any way, please contact her office at 271-3045.

Locations and contact information for local pantries:

Barrington Community Food Pantry, 39 Province Lane, Barrington, NH 03825, 664-9007

St. Thomas More (serving the Durham area including Madbury), 6 Madbury Rd., Durham, NH 03824, 868-2666

Nottingham Food Pantry, Old Town Hall, Nottingham, NH, 679-5209

Gerry's Food Pantry, 150 Wakefield St., Rochester, NH, 330-3468

Grace Community Church, 159 Rochester Hill Rd., Rochester, NH, 332-9689

The Community Food Pantry, 176 W. High St., Somersworth, NH, 03878, 692-2669

STOP Before Enrolling in Medicare Part D Cont'd.

It is absolutely necessary to review each of the Medicare Part D plans carefully each year before the open enrollment period. If you or someone you know needs assistance in reviewing these plans there are a number of social service providers who can assist in either helping to review the plans or directing you to someone who can.

Please contact any of the following to ask who can help to best determine which Medicare Part D plan best meets your needs:

NH ServiceLink at 1-866-634-9412 or visit www.servicelink.org

Strafford County ServiceLink, 1 Wakefield St., Suite 306, Rochester, NH 03867, 332-7398

Rockingham County ServiceLink, 287 Lawrence Rd., Salem, NH 03079, 893-9769

AARP, 118 North Main Street, Concord, NH 03301, 224-6095

Contacting Senator Cilley

Senator Cilley can be contacted via mail, e-mail or phone at the following:

Jackie Cilley, Senator, District 6
Statehouse, Rm. 107, Concord, NH 03301
Ph: 271-3045: Jacalyn.Cilley@leg.state.nh.us
Legislative Aide: Patrick Murphy: 271-2609

She is assigned to the following standing committees within the NH Senate:

Election Law, Vice-Chair
Energy, Environment & Economic Development
Executive Departments & Administration
Commerce Committee

In addition to the standing committees of the Senate, Senator Cilley also serves on a number of statutory committees. For example, she chairs the Commission to Study Large Groundwater Withdrawals, the Citizens Trade Policy Commission, the Commission to Study the Creation of an Animal Care Worker Classification and the Commission to Study Access to Consumer Credit for People in New Hampshire. For more information on other committees, commissions and statutory boards on which Sen. Cilley is a member please visit <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/statstudcomm/default.aspx>.

If you have any questions about these committees, simply want other information about the statehouse, our state government, or legislation that Senator Cilley is working on please don't hesitate to contact her.

Lastly, there is still time to suggest ideas for legislation that you might like to see enacted. If you would like to discuss ideas for legislation with Senator Cilley she would be happy to talk with you about it.

