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# CAP-FACTS

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Important Legislative Developments  
Provided to You by  
The National Community Action Foundation

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## 2006 Hill Talking Points

In preparation for your Hill visits during NCAF's Annual Legislative Conference next week, and for discussions you will have with your Members of Congress over the next few months, we have prepared the attached Talking Points. A one page tear-off sheet contains a checklist of what to accomplish in your visits next week.

As we move through the Budget debate and into the Appropriations process, some of these talking points will change, but the main message remains the same: all CAAs and their local allies must demonstrate the importance of these programs to their communities. This includes defining the need, describing the success (particularly of innovative programs) and advocating for continued investment.

A series of attachments are not included in the emailed or faxed version of these Talking Points, to facilitate their prompt electronic transmission. These include the funding table for key Community Action programs that has already been distributed this year, and supplemental LIHEAP and Weatherization materials. Each of these documents will be made available on the NCAF website ([www.ncaf.org/fy07budp.html](http://www.ncaf.org/fy07budp.html)) and in the Conference packets.

### **House FY 2007 Weatherization Dear Colleague**

Please note that one of the Talking Points attachments that is included is a copy of the House Dear Colleague on Weatherization. Congressmen Sanders (I-VT), Boehlert (R-NY) and Grijalva (D-AZ) are seeking cosigners for a joint letter to the Subcommittee on Energy and Water Appropriations requesting at least level funding (\$242 million) for Weatherization in FY 2007. As you know, the President's Budget Request proposes to cut Weatherization by a third, to \$164.2 million

Please contact your Members of Congress to request that they sign on to this letter, and be sure to include this in your discussions on Weatherization during your Hill visits.

Hill staff should contact Warren Gunnels in the office of Rep. Bernard Sanders at 5-4115, Eben Carle in the office of Sherwood Boehlert at 5-3665 or Rachel Kondor in the office of Rep. Raul Grijalva at 5-2435.

And please inform NCAF of any successful contacts you make with your Representatives. Email Meg Power at [megpower@ncaf.org](mailto:megpower@ncaf.org) to share your progress.

As of Monday, February 27, 37 Members of Congress had signed on: Sanders, Boehlert, Grijalva, Oberstar, Kildee, Kucinich, Schwartz, Markey, Langevin, Boucher, Van Hollen, Owens, Boswell, Doyle, Sherrod Brown, Ruppertsberger, Evans, Lynch, Blumenauer, Larson, Hooley, Maloney, Pomeroy, Michaud, Collin Peterson, McDermott, Holden, McCollum, Lipinski, Higgins, Israel, Cleaver, McCarthy, Neal, Stupak, Clay, and Pallone.

# National Community Action Foundation

## March 2006 Talking Points

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### How You Can Help Community Action During Your Congressional Visits

- ❑ **Budget Fairness for Local Communities.** Ask your Senators and Representatives to oppose any Budget Resolution that does not provide sufficient funding for human services, employment and training, health care, and other resources important to local communities back home. Ask your Senators to support the bipartisan floor amendment offered by Senator Harkin the week of March 13 to add \$8 billion to Labor-HHS (funding will be used to restore program cuts before any increases are made). Only with Budget fairness can Community Action programs such as CSBG, Head Start, LIHEAP and Weatherization receive the investments that our communities need.
- ❑ **CSBG.** The President's FY 2007 Budget Request once again calls for elimination of CSBG. Deliver these three messages in your Congressional visits: (1) "No one in the community wants to eliminate this program;" (2) "The flexible and cost-effective local funding of CSBG is crucial to deal with our growing problems in the community in light of cuts in other resources and steady increases in poverty;" and (3) "A bipartisan majority in Congress steadfastly opposes elimination of CSBG." Present your one-page paper explaining what communities will lose. Ask Members to sign on to joint letters that will be circulating this year in support of maintaining level funding for CSBG.
- ❑ **LIHEAP.** Nearly every Member of Congress can point to some record of advocating for more LIHEAP, so be generally grateful to all and give special thanks to the leaders listed in the background material.

**Update them about current needs in spite of the weather with a one-pager** containing local facts and stories about high bills and the suffering they cause. Demonstrate that the weather has not meant real relief from un-affordable bills.

**Congress may approve additional LIHEAP funding after the circulation of this document and before the NCAF Conference. Please refer to CAP-FACTS and the NCAF website for updated talking points about additional LIHEAP funding before your Hill meetings.**

**For next year's funding, ask Members to sign on to joint letters** that will be circulating this year in support of defeating the President's LIHEAP budget for LIHEAP.

- ❑ **Weatherization.**  
**Convey the message** that your Weatherization program is an effective antidote to the energy bills low-income households are seeing this year, and that you are amazed, as well as disappointed, in the President's proposal to slash the FY 2007 program by 32% after he has supported it for years. (See chart. Your cuts may be worse. Also-be positive about Weatherization, but not negative about others' energy priorities.)

**Ask House Members to sign the Boehlert/Sanders/ Grijalva** letter to Appropriations requesting level funding and put Weatherization in their personal letters to appropriators.

**Ask Senators** to sign on to joint letters that will be circulating this year in support of maintaining funding for Weatherization.

## Preparing for Meetings to Educate Your Members of Congress

*This material is being sent to help you better prepare for visiting your Congressional delegation while you are in Washington, D.C. March 7-10 attending the NCAF Legislative Conference.*

*If for some reason you could not schedule appointments with some of the offices now, you should still meet with your Congressional delegation at some point this year in your hometown. The remaining 2006 Congressional recesses are: March 20-24, April 10-21, May 29-June 2, July 3-7, July 31-September 4 (Senate does not start this recess until Aug. 7).*

### Making the Appointments

We strongly encourage you to make your Congressional appointments before you arrive in Washington. In making these appointments, ask the receptionist for the Legislative Assistant handling CSBG and our other core programs at HHS. When you reach him/her say you'll be in town and ask, "Would it be helpful to the Representative (or Senator) if I stopped by to brief you on the many important things our Community Action Agency is doing in your District?" This nearly always guarantees an invitation. (Weatherization and housing/community development are usually handled by a different person or even by two others. If you run these programs, mention to the CSBG Legislative Assistant that you have information for those staff persons too. Usually you can get more than one to attend a meeting, and, if not, at least they will realize the range of your responsibilities.)

Once you schedule the staff appointment, say, "I hope we will be able to say hello to the Congresswoman/man while we're there, too." Tell who will be accompanying you if you are not alone.

***(Have your photo ID ready and leave some extra time between meetings to clear security in Hill office buildings.)***

### What to Bring and What to Present

#### **Come prepared:**

- ✓ *Find out whether any of your board members are familiar with the Representative or Senator, and be sure to bring them or bring their specific greetings. If they do not attend, ask these board member(s) to make a follow-up call to their own contact in the Congressional office to reinforce your message.*
- ✓ *Know how often referrals are made to your agency from the Senator's/Representative's District Offices, and whether your staff has ongoing relationships with their constituent-services personnel.*

#### ***Bring with you:***

- The paper NCAF requested in the February 21 CAP-FACTS that CAAs prepare on the impact of eliminating CSBG on local communities (includes popular, needed local programs or partnerships that will cease or be disrupted; economic impact; disproportionate impact in specific areas (e.g., rural); number of individuals/families impacted; loss of jobs, loss of volunteers, etc.)
- One page of facts about the agency to summarize the information in your entire package. (Include the prominent contact information for you or the senior manager they should always contact for immediate response if your Senator/Representative has a need.)
- Letters from local elected officials and other community leaders addressed to the Senator or Representative with the following message: "We rely on this Community Action Agency. It is important to this community. Please do all you can to protect its core Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funding."
- One-page summaries, with specific local facts and examples, of the needs for other key programs administered by your CAA that you intend to discuss (LIHEAP, Weatherization, Head Start, etc.) Describe how each program responds effectively to the needs back home.

- A larger package to show the full scope of your agency. Include:
  - Agency budget, list of programs, client demographics, and list of key local partners, including faith-based and business organizations.
  - A list of your board of directors with their affiliations (e.g., bank president, minister, elected official).
  - Description of at least one current successful initiative that involves a variety of local partners, and is carried out in part with local and/or private leveraged funds.
  - Specific examples of how you have used CSBG funds in the last two years to:
    - (1) move people out of poverty;
    - (2) create an innovative program that represents a new approach to fighting poverty and/or fills an unmet need that improves the community and builds its “social assets” (e.g., community development, community policing, or a utility discount);
    - (3) respond to local economic downturns with emergency aid, assistance with achieving self-sufficiency (training, housing, transportation, etc.), and particularly economic development with new employers and retraining for new jobs;
    - (4) assist hurricane evacuees (emergency relief, resettlement, rebuilding); and
    - (5) make another initiative more successful (such as asset development for those in transition).
  
- Helpful additions, but not a substitute for a one-page presentation, include: an annual report, photos, presentations (like Weatherization Day events, press clippings, ROMA reports), etc.

***Please be sure NCAF gets a copy of your package, too!***

### **GOT A MINUTE?**

#### **What to say if you only see the Representative/Senator for 1 minute while shaking hands:**

*I really hope you'll come see the remarkable project we have going which (is what/does what?). I'm leaving materials with (staff member). There are a lot of possibilities for improving things in (hometowns), and we are pretty hopeful Congress will continue to demonstrate the historic bipartisan support CSBG and Community Action have long enjoyed. We'll need some real time to show you our work and discuss these options.*

*Oh, by the way, (old friend of Member who is on your Board, your partner, etc) is doing great and wanted to be remembered to you! We'll follow up with (staff, district staff, other).*

## During the Meeting

### **Context:**

The current budget environment leaves little room for investment in domestic programs. To reduce the deficit in light of increased Defense spending and reduced revenues from tax cuts, 141 program terminations and significant reductions are proposed in the President's FY 2007 Budget Request, as well as cuts in entitlement programs for the poor. The FY 2007 Labor-HHS bill will be \$4 billion less than current levels under the Budget Request, on top of the \$3 billion cut levied on FY 2006 funding. NCAF's 2006 talking points focus on CSBG, LIHEAP, Weatherization and Head Start, but you can also make the case about the untenable budget situation by illustrating numerous other program cuts in housing, nutrition, community and economic development, Older Americans services, National Service, and the like. Let your Members know that you are very aware of the deficit pressures; make it clear you are also aware that much deeper cuts are proposed in domestic discretionary programs over the next ten years. Give examples of how deepening cuts will be devastating to your local economy, to people now struggling to escape poverty, to projects your agency or community have underway. We need to impress upon Congress that this Budget hurts local communities back home in many ways.

### **Issue-by-issue: What to Accomplish in Your Presentation**

#### **CSBG –**

*(National talking points on the President's Budget Request for CSBG are attached as a separate document. You should be familiar with it and you can leave it with them, but it is not so important as the localized presentation described below.)*

#### **What to Accomplish:**

- Get a commitment from the Senator or Representative to vote no on any Budget Resolution that cuts CSBG. Ask them to support fairness in the Budget.
- Get a commitment from the Senator or Representative to speak with their colleagues on the Budget Committee on the needs for investment in CSBG, employment and training, education, health care, and other priorities for local communities.
- Get a commitment from the Senator to vote for Senator Harkin's bipartisan floor amendment to the Budget Resolution the week of March 13 to restore \$8 billion to Labor-HHS-Education appropriations.
- Get a commitment from the Senator or Representative to speak out in support of protecting CSBG funding, and sign on to joint letters in support of level-funding (\$630.4 million) for CSBG (likely House letters only).
- Get a commitment from your Senators and Representatives to support CSBG reauthorization this year. Ask Representatives to cosponsor the House bill: H.R. 341 (currently has 35 cosponsors). Special message to Senators: We anticipate that the bill that was passed unanimously by the Senate in the 108th Congress (S.1786) will be the basis of new legislation, and we ask for your support once again.
- Thank the staff and Member. Thank them also helping protect CSBG funding (and in particular, thank them again if they signed on to any joint letters in support of CSBG).
- Leave them with:
  - A clear understanding of the impact CSBG elimination will have on local communities they represent and the knowledge that no one in the community is calling for cuts in CSBG;
  - A sense of excitement about your programs and current initiatives;
  - A sense of confidence that you understand the low-income community and its needs; and,
  - Recognition of the local leaders who partner with your CAA and what they represent.

Establish a friendly bond so they know you appreciate them, that you have much expertise to offer, and that they can use your help.

- Leave them feeling you will be helping them. Use your information about their current referrals to your agency to show how you can help them with their own daily work, especially meeting constituents' needs and staying informed about trends and events in your community. (They almost certainly don't know whom the District Office relies on and refers constituents to day-to-day.)

By the end of the meeting, find out what the Member will be willing to do to protect CSBG.

## Key Points:

### #1 Say "Thanks."

**Thank your Member for his/her support for protecting CSBG funding.** Remember: although only a few Members were responsible for actually protecting CSBG appropriations, nearly every Member supported these programs by signing on to joint letters in support of CSBG or voting for appropriations bills that restored CSBG funding. Reinforce the bipartisan support CSBG enjoys on the Hill. Say that you were deeply gratified by the strong support from both parties that has protected CSBG funding in recent years. Last year, over 60 Senators and almost 170 Representatives signed on to bipartisan joint letters in support of CSBG funding.

### #2 Present Your CAA in its Best Light

**Do NOT start by attacking the Bush CSBG termination or his other policies, like Head Start. Talk up the positive things** going on with your agency and the network. This is very important. Keep in mind that the last four Bush CSBG Budget Requests stated that the program does not have demonstrated results and is "static." We need positive news! Think of leading in with – *I want you know about some important successes we're having or some promising approaches we're taking*, etc.

- Then tell of an innovative program and/or positive community change you are working on or have achieved.
- Also mention a result of your work that can be quantified ("Our youth mentoring programs have a \*\*% success rate in keeping kids in school.").
- Mention a contemporary problem the Member has heard about that you are solving – helping the uninsured get health care, providing outreach for the new Medicaid (Medicare) prescription cards, addressing training and job creation for newly unemployed workers.
- From a rural area? Focus your presentation on your community's special rural issues and how your CAA approaches them. Tell about your role and coverage. Both parties are very focused on rural America.

### #3 Explain the uniqueness of CSBG.

In the conversation, spend your time highlighting examples of CSBG-supported activities that distinguish your work from organizations that only give out short-term and emergency assistance or from those that are primarily government human service agencies. Talk about the fact that CSBG funds the people who raise new money, create innovative programs, involve the community, and establish and keep partnerships going. CSBG also fills the gaps in other programs, particularly as public and private funding decreases. Use specific examples. At some point, work into your conversation, "CSBG is a small program that works very well in our/your District. It's the missing ingredient in other grant programs."

- Highlight your faith-based and business partnerships. Make sure you:
  - Share data, and anecdotes on your faith-based partnerships. Explain the history, the fact that you entered into or initiated such partnerships voluntarily.
  - Leave the Member or staffer with the understanding that Community Action is already a model of community-based/faith-based partnership that is working.
  - Connect your efforts with faith-based organizations to the Members interests/priorities. Perhaps she/he is affiliated with a local church, synagogue, etc. with which you work.
- Describe your services for the working poor and their families. Make sure you:
  - Explain how you help these families fill the gaps when they experience hardship, and help them move toward self-sufficiency.
  - Explain how you respond to bad economic conditions in your communities (e.g., layoffs) and provide emergency assistance for short-term crises (but emphasize your comprehensive services).
  - Talk about any asset-development initiatives.
  - Establish your CAA as an important actor in welfare reform and as the experienced local organization that can move TANF leavers and the working poor and their families towards self-sufficiency. Describe your agency's welfare-to-work efforts, family development/case management programs, asset development or entrepreneurship opportunities, and transportation services (either buses/shuttles or access to car ownership).

**#4 Tell them about measuring your results.** *Why?* To demonstrate your concern about good performance and being accountable. During the last Congress, we learned that CAA efforts to measure outcomes, especially ROMA, proved to Members and staff that the Administration claims about CAAs being “static” didn’t hold water. The important message is two-fold, touching management and programs.

(1) You have a commitment to ongoing progress of modernizing your fiscal and internal controls and reports, which have to track the 10? 20? 80? different programs you coordinate. You are very committed to being the best kind of 21<sup>st</sup> century community non-profit agency. (Further, it is a developmental process partly because our community staff is new to information systems, partly because both ROMA systems and management systems come from our administrative budgets, which we try to keep low, and mostly because we have to adopt tools developed for business or big government. I/we want you to know we’re carrying out our part of a nationwide Community Action commitment to good performance.)

(2) You are working hard to develop legitimate measures of your many programs’ effectiveness and then to use them to track how we’re doing; eventually we want to measure our processes, our people, and whether the programs are designed right. This is a nationwide effort that all CAAs and states are pioneering.

Follow-up, if there’s an opening, emphasize how this is a cutting edge experiment”. There are no models for measuring the outcomes of coordinating four or five different kinds of resources and services the way we work with families. There also are no precedents for cost-effective ways to measure the impact of the community changes we have spearheaded like the (name one of yours: health center/rural bus system/utility rate discount/street lighting, etc.) No other Block Grant has anything like this. However, we’ll keep working at this until we have figured it out; all CAAs nationwide are involved.

“Show and tell” materials can include not only any “polished” summary ‘results’ report you have, but also a sample worksheet, tracking form, and any training material you use will probably impress and give some reality to our ground-breaking work.

**After this positive approach, deal with the threat:**

**#5 Explain the impact on the communities back home if CSBG is eliminated.** Emphasize that no one is calling for cutting CSBG back home. List the local elected officials, business leaders, and other key local partners that oppose any cuts in CSBG that will threaten the work you do for the community. Use the one-page impact description we outline above. Also point out that the President’s Budget proposes to terminate CSBG despite the bipartisan Congressional effort to protect the program.

**#6 Request their support for protecting CSBG funding.** Request that Members speak with their colleagues on the Budget Committees about maintaining CSBG at current levels (\$630.4 million). Request a vote against any Budget Resolution that under funds Function 500 and does not provide for level funding for CSBG. Request that Representatives sign on to bipartisan joint letters to the Budget and Appropriations Committee in support of level funding for CSBG. (Note: In this tight budget year, we are simply seeking a freeze in CSBG funding, nothing more.) Request that Senators support the bipartisan floor amendment to the Budget Resolution to increase funding for Function 500 (education and training, human services, health care).

**# 7 Request their support for a bipartisan CSBG reauthorization.** Reauthorization bills passed with bipartisan support in the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress, and legislation reintroduced in the House last year (H.R. 341) builds on that tradition. Ask Representatives to cosponsor H.R. 341, and Senators to support legislation that may be introduced this year that mirrors the Senate bill in the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress (S. 1786) that passed with a unanimous vote. Tell them we want to strengthen the program, continuing the gains at the local level and imposing accountability at the State and Federal levels as well.

**Try to leave the meeting with:**

- A commitment to support no less than level funding (\$630.4 million) for CSBG in FY 2007;
- A commitment to support budget fairness, and to vote for the bipartisan amendment to the Senate Budget Resolution to restore funding to education and training, human services, and health care programs; and
- A promise by the Member AND staff to visit your agency, a reason for you to make future contacts.

## **Your Head Start, LIHEAP, Weatherization and Other Programs**

*Keep in mind: many groups we ally with are working on Head Start, LIHEAP and CSBG. We are unique in speaking for CSBG and WAP.*

### **For CAAs that run Head Start –**

**What to Bring:** A one-page summary of your Head Start program and any information you have on its results. Include a description of the family services you provide, the day care arrangements you provide or make referrals to, and other evidence of the value of having a CAA as a provider of multiple investments in family development. Also briefly describe the impact of the proposed ‘freeze’ in FY 2007 funding in terms of lost services for children in the community, if you believe they are significant.

### **What to Accomplish:**

- CAAs should continue to emphasize to their elected officials that they are experienced, skilled providers of effective support, including Head Start, to young children. You should leave this meeting with a firm identity as the go-to person on Head Start issues in the District.
- You should make the point that limiting funding in Function 500 of the Budget Resolution squeezes Head Start funding as well and investments need to be made to serve the community and increase quality.
- Reauthorization of the program should strengthen the current federal to local relationship, continue the rule of nonprofits that can provide access to a range of services for the family (such as CAAs), and strengthen quality and accountability with proven best practices.

### **Key Points:**

**#1 Reinforce** that, as the Member struggles with these questions, you hope that she/he turns to you and your local Head Start program to work through the complex issues being raised by the current debate in Congress.

**#2 Provide an overview of your Head Start program**, its size, facilities, partners, and the programs that you coordinate with it for day care, health care, parent support/fatherhood, mentoring, etc. Say you are proud of its accomplishments and also say you have worked hard to meet the challenges of expansion and quality enhancement for more than a decade. Be sure to emphasize how well your enrollees do on the readiness-to-learn tests as well.

**#3 Request an investment in Head Start funding.** As the cost of providing services increases, stagnant funding for the program reduces the number of children who can be served. Under the Presidents’ Budget Request for level funding for Head Start, it is estimated that 19,000 children nationwide will go unserved.

**#4 Request a Head Start reauthorization that strengthens the federal to local relationship and invests in proven best practices.** A good message that deals with substance not politics is: you hope Head Start legislation addresses accountability and quality and ‘protects’ the existing successful relationship with Community action.

## For CAAs that run Weatherization –

### What to Bring and Convey:

**The message** you are delivering is that your Weatherization program is an effective antidote to the energy bills low-income households are seeing this year, that those bills have never been so high, the weather notwithstanding, and that you could do much more to alleviate them if the program had consistent significant funding. You are emphasizing that the President's proposal to slash the program by 32% after he supported it for years, is especially surprising as well as disappointing in the face of realities back home (see chart. Your cuts may be worse.).

**Bring materials that demonstrate** that the program has real impact and that it does much more than seal up a few cracks or insulate an attic. It should include:

- The basic one-page summary of your program that shows all the homes you weatherized to date with all the programs you run and your FY 2005 record, the homes still waiting, the number of people you or your contractors employ and train. Your energy savings results are important, especially translated in reduced bills. The nationwide average is 30% of the main heating bill and 10% of non-heat electricity. (That average is probably irrelevant in your market; the more you have measured your savings and can express them as usage and Bill reductions, the stronger the effect.) Explain how present and future results may be higher than past averages.
- This page should also summarize your work for private partners, especially utilities. Let them know if your [program is much bigger than DOE alone, but *tell them why the DOE is the framework for your capacity and how the fact that you have the capacity attracts partners' funding for the community.*
- A second page should list the new technologies you are using, from blower doors and computerized audits to testing devices; it and point out technologies and diagnostics they don't see on any old home remodeling job. Tell them how you have geared up your investment in trained technical staff, tools, software, and technology to weatherize dozens more homes. It may be wasted. (You don't have to understand them yourself! just demonstrate that the government technology is ahead of the building industry and your program is getting it out into the market.) Pictures are a helpful bonus.
- Let them know how many people are waiting and still paying bills for wasted energy Consult NCAF's Chart of Cuts to see what your state will lose under the President's plan.

Leave them understanding that the Weatherization Program is cutting edge, effective, and an appropriate response to high bills.

### What to accomplish:

#### 1. Get a commitment to oppose the President's proposed cut in Weatherization.

- a. If they have not signed on to the Sanders-Boehlert-Grijalva letter yet, ask them to do so (see attached copy; updated list of signers at the website and at the registration desk.) If they have, signed be extra grateful. It requests that Weatherization be protected at least at the current level, or \$242 million.
- b. In addition, you must ask directly for them to include the same request in their personal letters to the Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development.

Ask your Republican Representatives to write House Energy and Water Appropriations Chairman David Hobson, and ask Republican Senators to write Senate Energy and Water Appropriations Chairman Pete Dominici.

Democratic Senators should be asked to write to Sen. Harry Reid, and Democratic Representatives should write to Rep. Pete Visclosky, the two senior Democrats on the same Subcommittees.

2. **Get a commitment for a site visit by** the staff and or the Member in principle. Suggest a specific "District Work Period" (Easter, Memorial Day, and maybe July 4 will precede Appropriations decisions). Offer to invite your utility partners and other local VIP's to join him/her.

## For CAAs that run LIHEAP –

**What to Bring:** A summary of your LIHEAP program (dollars, participants, any partnerships, leveraging or interesting initiatives); A short update giving a clear picture of how hard it is to afford energy this winter, local information on the demand for LIHEAP, and the bills compared to the benefits. You should explain LIHEAP in quantities of fuel not dollars. Say: *“This year, benefits buy (1.5? 2?) tanks of oil or ( 3 ? 4?) weeks of gas heat when 3 years ago the same benefit bought 2 (or 3 or whatever is the case) times the same thing.”*; information on emergencies and people living with no heat in winter. Highlight leveraging or advocacy work to show how CAAs innovate, advocate, work with the industry.

### What to Accomplish:

- **Say THANK YOU to your Member for fighting for more LIHEAP funding for this year.** Many Members of Congress have signed letters and voted for Bills that contain supplemental LIHEAP funds to increase the current program above the appropriation. Thank them. We are providing a list of the leaders in this fight who should be singled out for special thanks.
- **Provide a written update on the continuing need for LIHEAP,** include energy prices and bills from your biggest suppliers, individual examples, the level of benefits needed, the number of new applications or the overload, if any, on your intake system. Get across the message that the weather isn't warm enough and the prices haven't dropped enough to reduce the terrible pressures on your clients. Our packet has new national figures on bills, but your local story matters most. Explain next year's bills are supposed to be much the same and what you believe will be needed compared to the resources you have now.
- **Clarify what state or utility funding is doing for your program.** Members have the idea that a lot of state relief has been offered; in fact, some of your states have not released any funds to the program and 17 states have no additional funding. List the resources you leverage and their purpose.
- **Establish your agency as the “go-to” local source to help with the energy needs of low-income constituents and to provide information on current energy costs, consumer problems, etc.** Make it clear that your agency is THE place where the Representative or Senator can refer constituents and turn to for advice. Provide contact information for your agency – for you or your energy program director.

# National Community Action Foundation

## FY 2007 Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Budget Request Talking Points

### **Funding:**

The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) was funded at \$630.4 million in FY 2006. The FY 2007 Budget Request calls for its elimination.

### **What CSBG does:**

The CSBG statute establishes the grass-roots governing structure of local Community Action Agencies; it funds their core operations, and supports their unique local activities. The 1,100 CAAs are found in every county. They fight poverty by investing in self-sufficiency for low-income individuals, families and communities.

CSBG assists more than 15 million individuals in 6 million families yearly, reaching as many as 22% of people in poverty and millions more with incomes at or below 125% of the Poverty Guideline (\$20,750 for a family of 3 today). Nearly half these families are working while they participate in CAA programs.

Because of CSBG, CAAs can integrate many programs and services into a comprehensive, systematic approach to fighting poverty by promoting self-sufficiency. Program participants have access to affordable housing, health care, employment support, energy assistance and preventive or crisis intervention. The community at large has an institution that can develop new community assets and start project operating smoothly.

CSBG provides the resources CAA leaders use to engage local partners in rebuilding and strengthening the low-income communities they serve. Each CAA governing board includes government representatives, area citizens, local business, neighborhood civic groups, and the faith community.

These "tripartite" CAA boards define the roles of local CAAs, establish their priorities for serving the local communities, and design solutions the needs of the low-income individuals served.

Every CSBG dollar was matched by \$4.87 from State, local and private resources. Volunteers donate 44 million hours a year and count on CAAs to direct them to effective programs. All together, CSBG leverages almost \$10 billion in other federal, state, local and private resources.

### **WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF CSBG IS ELIMINATED?**

'Zeroing out' the Community Services Block Grant eliminates the funding that allows Community Action Agencies to mobilize new funding, engage local partners, and create projects that address the specific causes of poverty in their communities. At least a third of CAAs will have to close their doors immediately, and a majority will have to suspend services within a few short years.

Without CSBG, most programs will revert to uncoordinated, one-size-fits-all social service programs. New ideas and projects addressing unmet poverty needs in local communities will have no consistent support.

Participation in the governance of CAAs is a doorway to democracy for members of the low-income community. Together with, and equal to, local private sector representatives, including business and charities, and elected officials, the low-income community leadership directs the use of CAA resources to ensure the initiatives are the most effective investments possible.

Because the CAAs have designed solutions specific to their own community needs, a wide variety of services will be lost if CSBG is eliminated. Examples include rural outreach centers (the only link to services in many rural communities nationwide), asset development strategies (including homeownership, education and training, entrepreneurship programs), community and economic development, transportation, and health care.

**Current Signers: (37) Sanders, Boehlert, Grijalva, Oberstar, Kildee, Kucinich, Schwartz, Markey, Langevin, Boucher, Van Hollen, Owens, Boswell, Doyle, Sherrod Brown, Ruppertsberger, Evans, Lynch, Blumenauer, Larson, Hooley, Maloney, Pomeroy, Michaud, Collin Peterson, McDermott, Holden, McCollum, Lipinski, Higgins, Israel, Cleaver, McCarthy, Neal, Stupak, Clay, and Pallone.**

## **SUPPORT THE LOW-INCOME WEATHERIZATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

*Please co-sign Letter to the Appropriators*

Dear Colleague:

Please join us in co-signing the attached letter to the Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee in support of the Low-Income Weatherization Assistance Program. Specifically, the letter urges the appropriators to provide no less than the current funding level of \$242 million for this important program.

The Weatherization program improves the energy efficiency of low-income homes, thereby greatly reducing energy costs for those least able to afford them. Through this program, low-income families have seen their energy bills reduced by 31% and energy consumption by over 20%. At this year's fuel prices, weatherized homes will have winter natural gas bills that are more than \$400 lower and heating oil bills that are about \$500 lower than they would have been without Weatherization investments.

These savings can be used for other important family needs such as food, clothing, housing and other basic necessities of life. The nation and other utility customers also benefit by the reduction in demand for precious oil and gas supplies.

About 5.3 million homes have been weatherized by this program alone, and the local delivery agencies have leveraged nearly as much from non-federal funds as from the DOE program each year. However, there are about 20 million households still eligible for weatherization services, and most community action agencies already have waiting lists that will take one to four years to complete.

Weatherization is one of the real, proven success stories among the government's programs to change the lives of low-income families and it has never been sovaluable as it is in today's energy market.

If you would like to co-sign this letter please contact Warren Gunnels in the office of Rep. Bernard Sanders at 5-4115, Eben Carle in the office of Sherwood Boehlert at 5-3665 or Rachel Kondor in the office of Rep. Raul Grijalva at 5-2435.

Sincerely,

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Bernard Sanders  
Member of Congress

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Sherwood Boehlert  
Member of Congress

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Raul Grijalva  
Member of Congress

The Honorable David L. Hobson  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Energy and Water  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Peter J. Visclosky  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Energy and Water  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Hobson and Ranking Member Visclosky,

We are writing to urge your Subcommittee to provide funding for the FY 2007 Department of Energy Weatherization Assistance Program at no less than the current level, \$242 million.

We do not support the Budget request to reduce Weatherization funding; millions who cannot afford the energy that their dilapidated older housing units require need help immediately. Weatherization changes energy bills permanently and significantly. The savings, measured in either scarce household dollars or volumes of gas and oil conserved, multiply with each passing year. Their value increases directly as prices go up. The nation's energy priorities should include immediate savings and relief from high bills, as well as sound long term energy research.

Weatherization has won its bipartisan support by delivering proven energy results. The Department has documented that, year after year, it reduces home heating bills by an average of 31% and year-round usage by over 20%. In the face of the Department of Energy prediction that energy bills will continue to rise, the program's value will also rise, and the protection afforded to the poor will actually grow over time.

At this year's fuel prices, as estimated by the Energy Information Administration, weatherized homes will have winter natural gas bills that are more than \$400 below the amount they would have been without Weatherization. In addition, homes that heat with fuel oil will, on average, save over \$500 on heating alone through the Weatherization program.

About 5.3 million homes have been weatherized by the DOE program, and we estimate another 2 to 3 million have been weatherized by the Community Action Agencies using Department of Energy techniques, and funds from LIHEAP or utility programs. However, there are about 20 million households still eligible for weatherization services, and most local agencies already have waiting lists that will take one to four years to complete.

Your Subcommittee is known for its support of commercializing the fruits of government research. The Weatherization program has tested emerging technologies and created markets for them; national laboratories have created software tools and new protocols to support decisions about what investments to make in a home. The training for this program is moving taxpayer-funded building efficiency technology directly to local homebuilding markets.

Local Weatherization programs have ramped up staffing and contracting and have intensified training ever since the Congress provided a significant program increase in FY 2002. Several major utility-funded programs have been initiated and coordinated with the Weatherization network's DOE-funded work. The capacity and the reliability of the DOE program attract these other funders.

Should the funding for the Weatherization Assistance Program drop below the current level, the new capacity, equipment and, more important, the trained workforce will no longer be fully utilized; private investment that depends on the DOE program delivery capability will be lost.

We support the plan passed by both Houses in the Energy Policy Act of 2005 that more than doubles Weatherization funding and we hope your Subcommittee will, at the very least, maintain its operations until it can be fully funded. We appreciate your consideration of our views.

Sincerely,