

Senator Patterson offered the following concurrent resolution:

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 42.

A resolution to memorialize the President and the Congress of the United States to increase funding for home heating assistance to cope with the rise in natural gas costs expected this winter.

Whereas, Natural gas prices have risen significantly over the past year. The reasons include increasing demand for natural gas, declining production in both the United States and Canada, and disruptions to the energy supply infrastructure caused by Hurricane Katrina. While this increase in cost has already exacted a toll in many areas of our national economy, the full impact has yet to be felt. This winter, when seasonal demand reaches its peak, costs are expected to strike a terrible blow to people who have had difficulties paying their home heating bills even before the recent increase in prices; and

Whereas, For many years, utilities and their customers have supplemented governmental programs through various heating assistance initiatives. However, public and private programs offering help to low-income families trying to heat their residences are already stretched thin. This winter's situation is expected to bring a crisis to many people, including low-income seniors who will almost surely face difficult choices; and

Whereas, Michigan's Public Service Commission has warned that homeowners could expect increases of \$40 a month or more if the winter is very cold. Gas companies in Michigan and across the country are urging their customers to take steps to prepare for the cost of winter home-heating fuel by budgeting for this expense and having their homes properly weatherized. Another key part of dealing with this problem will be for Congress to significantly increase funding to help state programs for low-income residents; and

Whereas, The federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is one of the most critical components of the social safety net. Community Action Agencies and advocates for the vulnerable in society have called for increases to LIHEAP for the past several years as appropriations levels have not kept up with rising heating costs, rising poverty, and an ever-increasing aging population. There are discussions under way in Congress to increase the current funding level for LIHEAP to at least \$3.4 billion. Clearly, such actions to bring home-heating help to our most needy citizens are in order; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That we memorialize the President and the Congress of the United States to increase funding for home heating assistance to cope with the rise in natural gas costs expected this winter; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the Office of President of the United States, the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, and the members of the Michigan congressional delegation.