

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 913 Session of
2007

INTRODUCED BY VEREB, BELFANTI, CURRY, DALLY, DeLUCA, DePASQUALE,
DeWEESE, EVERETT, FABRIZIO, FREEMAN, GEORGE, GIBBONS,
GOODMAN, HENNESSEY, JAMES, JOSEPHS, KIRKLAND, KOTIK, LEACH,
MAHONEY, MANDERINO, MANN, MOYER, MUNDY, PETRONE, PICKETT,
RAPP, READSHAW, REICHLEY, ROSS, RUBLEY, SCAVELLO, SIPTROTH,
SOLOBAY, J. TAYLOR, THOMAS AND YOUNGBLOOD, MARCH 22, 2007

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS, MARCH 22, 2007

AN ACT

1 Providing for the Low-Income Weatherization Assistance Program
2 and for an evaluation of the program; and authorizing
3 additional funding for the program through interfund
4 transfers.

5 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
6 hereby enacts as follows:

7 Section 1. Short title.

8 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Low-Income
9 Home Energy Weatherization Improvement Act.

10 Section 2. Declaration of policy.

11 The General Assembly finds and declares that:

12 (1) Many residents of this Commonwealth are finding it
13 difficult to pay for energy services, due to the sharp energy
14 price increases experienced by many Pennsylvanians recently.

15 (2) The Department of Energy has projected that natural
16 gas heating costs this winter are expected to rise over 30%
17 from last winter and home heating oil costs are expected to

1 also rise over 30% this winter.

2 (3) In view of these sharp increases, Commonwealth
3 residents can expect to pay higher costs to heat and cool
4 their homes.

5 (4) The current high and volatile nature of energy
6 prices has made it essential to consider increased funding
7 for energy assistance programs.

8 (5) Studies have predicted that the price of fossil
9 fuels will rise at the rate of 6% to 10% per year for the
10 next 20 years. If the cost of energy increases at 6% per year
11 by 2024, it will cost the average low-income household in
12 Philadelphia, for example, almost \$8,000 to meet that
13 household's energy and water needs.

14 (6) Energy conservation helps to maintain affordable
15 energy bills and reduces our nation's dependence on foreign
16 oil; therefore, it serves a public purpose to provide support
17 to programs which can reduce home energy costs and
18 consumption.

19 (7) It serves a public purpose to provide supplemental
20 funding to the Low-Income Weatherization Assistance Program
21 in order to help eligible families with reducing their home's
22 energy consumption.

23 (8) Increases in energy prices have generated additional
24 unanticipated sales tax revenue to the Commonwealth that can
25 be used to offset the costs of supplemental funding under
26 this act.

27 Section 3. Definitions.

28 The following words and phrases when used in this act shall
29 have the meanings given to them in this section unless the
30 context clearly indicates otherwise:

1 "Commission." The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission.

2 "Department." The Department of Community and Economic
3 Development of the Commonwealth.

4 "Eligible household." The term includes a household with
5 income at or below 200% of the Federal poverty level.

6 "Low-Income Weatherization Assistance Program" or "program."
7 The program established by Title XXVI of The Omnibus Budget
8 Reconciliation Act of 1981 (Public Law 97-35, 42 U.S.C. § 8621
9 et. seq.) and administered by the Department of Community and
10 Economic Development with funds received through the Department
11 of Public Welfare and the Department of Energy.

12 Section 4. Administration of Low-Income Weatherization
13 Assistance Program.

14 (a) Revisions to current program guidelines.--The department
15 shall develop revisions to the current program guidelines so
16 that the program is positioned to take advantage of the greatest
17 possible savings in terms of energy and energy costs and shall
18 expand the list of eligible energy conservation measures to
19 include new measures that are shown to be cost effective.

20 (b) Independent evaluation.--The department shall undertake
21 an independent evaluation of the program for the purpose of
22 improving the quality and effectiveness of the program. The
23 evaluation shall at a minimum include:

24 (1) A determination of the overall effectiveness in
25 terms of the cost versus the benefits of the program.

26 (2) A determination of the level of energy savings
27 achieved by each grantee or subgrantee and on a per home
28 basis by each grantee or subgrantee.

29 (3) The effectiveness of the energy conservation
30 measures being installed.

(4) Other improvements, including, but not limited to:

(i) Jobs created.

(ii) Peak load reductions.

(iii) Any recommendations to improve the program's effectiveness, especially in service delivery and in increasing the types of energy conservation measures to be installed.

(c) Schedule for ongoing evaluations.--The department shall develop a schedule for conducting ongoing evaluations of the program. The department shall submit copies of the evaluation report to the Public Health and Welfare Committee of the Senate, the Environmental Resources and Energy Committee of the Senate, the Health and Human Services Committee of the House of Representatives and the Environmental Resources and Energy Committee of the House of Representatives.

(d) Joint study.--The department and the commission shall jointly conduct an annual review of the program and the universal service and energy conservation policies, protections and services defined in 66 Pa.C.S. § 2803 (relating to definitions), specifically low-income usage reduction programs conducted by public utilities. The review shall include, but not be limited to:

(1) Methods to improve the coordination and effectiveness between the program and those programs.

(2) Opportunities to increase the energy savings resulting from activities of the program and those programs.

Any written report or evaluation of the review shall be a public record open to public inspection under the act of June 21, 1957 (P.L.390, No.212), referred to as the Right-to-Know Law.

Section 5. Transfer of funds.

1 On or before September 1 of fiscal years 2007-2008, 2008-2009
2 and 2009-2010, the State Treasurer shall transfer the amount of
3 \$15,000,000 each year from the General Fund to the Emergency
4 Energy Assistance Fund administered by the Department of Public
5 Welfare and used exclusively for providing supplemental funding
6 to the Low-Income Weatherization Assistance Program administered
7 by the department. Any of the transferred funds that are
8 unencumbered and unexpended by June 30, 2010, shall be
9 immediately transferred to the General Fund. On or before June
10 30, 2009, the department and the Department of Public Welfare
11 shall jointly submit a report to the Appropriations Committee of
12 the Senate, the Public Health and Welfare Committee of the
13 Senate, the Environmental Resources and Energy Committee of the
14 Senate, the Appropriations Committee of the House of
15 Representatives, the Health and Human Services Committee of the
16 House of Representatives and the Environmental Resources and
17 Energy Committee of the House of Representatives providing an
18 overall evaluation of the program to date.
19 Section 6. Effective date.
20 This act shall take effect in 60 days.