

## House Republican Press Release

August 21, 2008  
Press Office: 860-240-8700

### Shoreline Communities Working to Avert Home Heating Crisis



By State Representative Marilyn Giuliano

A coalition is building on the Shoreline and in the Lower Connecticut River valley to assist those who might otherwise be cold this winter because of the high cost of home heating fuel. Individual and family budgets already stretched thin by the competing demands of paying much higher prices for gasoline and groceries, will become further distressed by the costs of keeping warm.

With energy at worldwide record prices, local seniors, and individuals in low and fixed income categories may be unable to afford \$5 a gallon for oil or other fuel to heat their homes.

In late July, I met with local selectmen, directors of our regional social service agencies, the Shoreline Soup Kitchens personnel, the Estuary Center, clergy and emergency management personnel at the Connecticut River Estuary Regional Planning Agency to map out strategies and options to meet an increased need for heating oil assistance. We were joined by the Connecticut Department of Social Services manager of energy assistance who gave an update on the status of state and federal programs.

At the state level, the governor and the legislature are expected to take \$20 million in surplus from the fiscal year that ended June 30 and transfer it to home heating assistance for the coming winter. At the urging of the Northeast governors, Congress in Washington is also expected to increase federal fuel assistance funds available this winter. Although these initiatives will undoubtedly help, concerns persist that our regional needs for home heating assistance may eclipse these resources.

Over the next 60 days, our local group will meet again to identify a series of government and private actions to keep families safe and warm during our cold winter months. Long before winter weather closes in, we want to have in a plan in place.

#### **A Range of Possible Solutions**

A number of possible solutions to address the problem of costly home heating options have emerged from this initial discussion. They include:

- Maximizing federal and state heating assistance dollars for area residents who are currently eligible, and negotiating to increase eligibility for assistance
- Extending and adjusting hours of operation for municipal buildings, senior centers, and church based Shoreline Soup Kitchens meal sites for additional hours per week to act as heating centers for people who may be keeping thermostats low at home
- Encouraging individual donations to nonprofit agencies and faith-based organizations in an organized “Give a Gallon” fundraising campaign
- Providing public information outlining what fuel assistance is available at the local and state levels
- Taking applications early for home heating assistance, rather than waiting for a winter cold spell
- Providing safety information about installation and operating precautions when using wood or pellet stoves, or other alternative heat sources

These are just a few of the possible steps to prepare to address the reality of high priced heating oil before it becomes a cold weather crisis. As always, I invite other comments and suggestions that you may have. Please feel free to contact my Capitol office at 1-800-842-1423.

*Marilyn Giuliano is the state Representative for Lyme, Old Lyme, Old Saybrook and coastal Westbrook in the Connecticut General Assembly.*