

House Republican Press Release

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Miller: Heating Assistance Could Get Scarce



Illegal Aliens on Program Could Take LIHEAP Funds from Citizens

HARTFORD- State Representative Larry Miller (R-122) today called on those who would need to apply for Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) to do so as early as possible in the wake of revelations that illegal immigrants have been obtaining home heating assistance.

Miller said that the LIHEAP funding, which comes to states in the form of a block grant from the federal government and is distributed through a Community Action Agency (CAA) could be taken from legal Connecticut residents who need it and given to undocumented aliens who are not allowed to collect the assistance.

Attorney General Richard Blumenthal issued a legal opinion earlier this week which stated that while CAAs are not allowed under the law to distribute LIHEAP funds to illegal aliens, federal law prohibits CAAs from inquiring into the citizenship status of an applicant.

“It was very disturbing to learn that not only have illegal immigrants been applying for and receiving these funds, but the system has been virtually constructed to facilitate it,” said Miller. “Employees of CAA-NH apparently generated false Social Security numbers for applicants who were not in this country legally. These applicants are potentially taking heating assistance from legal residents who are in need.”

Miller, as a member of the legislature’s Energy Committee, participated in a joint committee hearing on the topic last night at the capitol that also included the Appropriations and Human Services Committees. “This meeting was absurd,” said Miller. “I am encouraged that the Department of Social Services is eager to take steps to see that this assistance is legally disbursed, but I am disappointed in legislative Democrats who don’t seem to want to take any action to correct this.”

A whistleblower case is currently in the Attorney General’s Office, where former employees of The Community Action Agency of New Haven (CAA-NH) have accused the agency of fraud for processing the applications of illegals, stating they were required to put through the applications by generating the false Social Security numbers.

“No one, least of all me, wants to see anyone freeze during harsh winter months,” said Miller. “But the answer is not building a side system that violates federal law.”

Miller has joined other legislators who have called for:

- DSS to assign a veteran employee to review existing applications and ensure they are processed and funded according to state statute and federal law.
- DSS to demand CAA Board of Directors immediately require the two main administrators of the LIHEAP program be placed on an administrative leave of absence until further notice. There is evidence the two top administrators attempted to stifle employees when this matter became public. The administrators’ presence therefore would impair any effort to have an open and fair audit.
- Creation of a CAA Board of Directors in accordance with Connecticut General Statute Section 17b-886.