

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 11, 2011

Jacob J. Lew
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Director Lew:

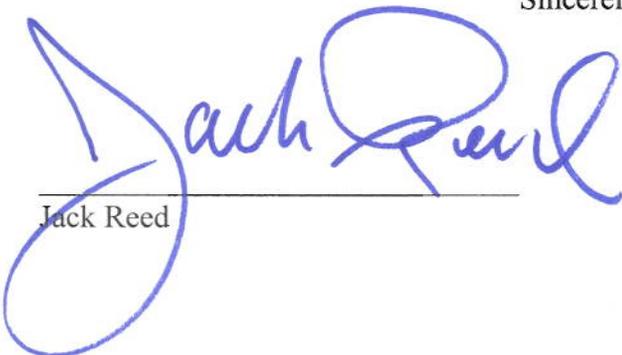
Congress and the Administration confront challenging fiscal decisions, and we recognize that we will need to work cooperatively to address our country's deficit in a manner that will promote job growth and economic recovery. However, we are deeply concerned by reports of very large cuts to the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) in the President's Fiscal Year 2012 budget. We ask that you reconsider this decision in light of the economic hardships facing low-income families and seniors.

We believe it is critical that careful attention is paid to the effect of rising energy prices on our economic recovery. According to the most recent data, energy costs are increasingly taking up a larger share of U.S. consumers' budgets, accounting for more than 6 percent as of December. Historically, according to Professor James Hamilton at the University of California, when energy costs approach 5 percent of consumers' budgets, there is a burden on economic growth as consumers are forced to reduce spending on other necessities such as food, health care, and housing. These are the hard economic realities facing millions of Americans as gasoline, heating oil, and electricity prices increase across the country.

LIHEAP directly addresses these economic challenges. The program helps low-income families and seniors with their energy bills, while at the same time generates \$1.13 in economic activity for every dollar in benefits paid, according to economists Mark Zandi and Alan S. Blinder. We strongly believe that the Administration's Fiscal Year 2012 (FY12) budget proposal should reflect this. Increased assistance for LIHEAP and energy efficiency improvements, such as weatherization programs and increased residential tax credits, will mitigate the burden on our economy from rising energy prices. Failing to provide basic energy assistance for our low-income families, the millions of Americans seeking work, and middle-income Americans may threaten our economic recovery.

We appreciate your consideration of our request and look forward to working with you to recognize these priorities as we confront our nation's economic and budget challenges.

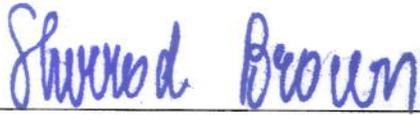
Sincerely,



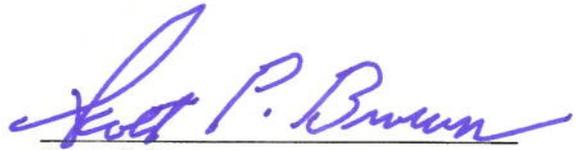
Jack Reed



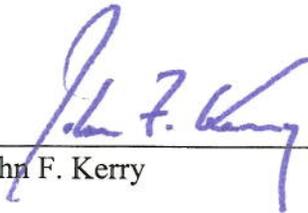
Olympia J. Snowe



Sherrod Brown



Scott P. Brown



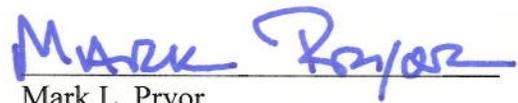
John F. Kerry



Sheldon Whitehouse



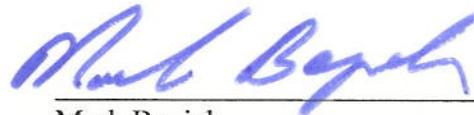
Barbara A. Mikulski



Mark L. Pryor



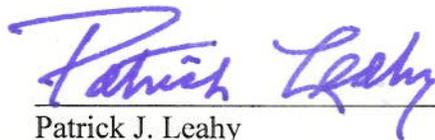
Frank R. Lautenberg



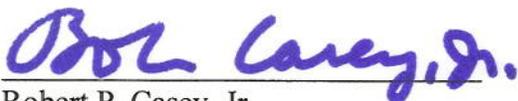
Mark Begich



Richard J. Durbin



Patrick J. Leahy



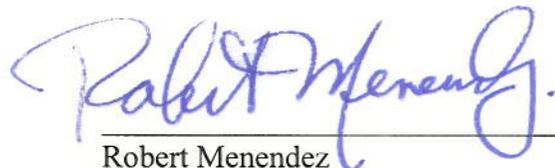
Robert P. Casey, Jr.



Carl Levin



Bernard Sanders



Robert Menendez

Kirsten E. Gillibrand

Kirsten E. Gillibrand

Charles E. Schumer

Charles E. Schumer

Chris Coons

Christopher A. Coons

Jeff Merkley

Jeff Merkley

Al Franken

Al Franken

Susan M. Collins

Susan M. Collins

Jeanne Shaheen

Jeanne Shaheen

Richard Blumenthal

Richard Blumenthal

John D. Rockefeller IV

John D. Rockefeller IV

Mary L. Landrieu

Mary L. Landrieu

Jeff Bingaman

Jeff Bingaman

Amy Klobuchar

Amy Klobuchar

Ron Wyden

Ron Wyden

Jim Webb

Jim Webb

Patty Murray

Patty Murray