

**GOVERNOR RENDELL CONVENES SESSIONS TO ADDRESS
LOCAL HELP FOR SENIORS AND OTHERS THIS WINTER**
Governor Hosts Regional Stay Warm PA Energy Summits

11/1/2005: HARRISBURG — Governor Rendell brought local government, community, religious, labor and volunteer leaders from across the state together today to develop solutions to help Pennsylvania's neediest citizens deal with cold weather and rising fuel costs this winter.

The Governor hosted Pennsylvania's first **Stay Warm PA** energy summit via videoconference, giving local officials and community volunteer leaders a chance to discuss plans to support the state's most vulnerable citizens, including the elderly and poor families, this winter.

"We are working to make sure those most in need of our help are protected and cared for this winter," Governor Rendell said. "We want to mobilize an army of volunteers as part of our comprehensive **Stay Warm PA** program to make sure our most vulnerable citizens are warm and safe this winter.

"It is urgent that we all come together to make sure our neediest can meet their winter heating bills. We want to make sure volunteers are ready to weatherize homes, help the frail and elderly, establish warm rooms in homes and community centers and work collectively to address winter heating needs.

"So many respected statewide organizations have jumped at the chance to help us all be good neighbors this winter. It is clear that many warm hearts will help to provide warm homes."

Less than two weeks ago, Governor Rendell announced a comprehensive **Stay Warm PA** program that includes increased state funding and support from energy companies and utilities, up to \$30 million, for low-income energy assistance.

The Governor said: "Pennsylvanians will face increased prices to heat their homes in coming months, and we're acting now to make sure our neediest citizens can meet their winter heating bills this year."

Cabinet secretaries from seven agencies convened sessions at six locations across the commonwealth. Governor Rendell hosted a seventh session in Harrisburg.

"These summits are a part of the state's overall response to anticipated high energy costs this winter" said Governor Rendell. "Utilizing resources from both the public and private sectors, as well as unions and non-profit organizations, we are working with our many partners to develop and create regional strategies to protect our citizens in the coming months."

The summits started at 9 a.m. today in Philadelphia; Pittsburgh; Johnstown; Edinboro, Erie County; Archibald in Lackawanna County; and Easton. A member of Governor Rendell's Cabinet convened each session. At 11:30 a.m., the regional groups joined the Governor in Harrisburg via videoconference to report their strategies to address the energy crisis, including mobilizing volunteers and drawing on local resources.

The following cabinet secretaries convened the regional meetings:

- **Philadelphia**—Departments of Aging Secretary Nora Dowd Eisenhower and Public Welfare Secretary Estelle Richman
- **Pittsburgh**—Department of Community and Economic Development Secretary Dennis Yablonsky
- **Johnstown**—Department of Banking Secretary William Schenk

- **Edinboro**—Department of Labor and Industry Secretary Stephen Schmerin
- **Archibald**—Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Kathleen McGinty
- **Easton**—Department of Agriculture Secretary Dennis Wolff

In late September, the Governor joined 28 other state governors in asking Congress to increase federal funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. LIHEAP funding would have increased by \$3.4 billion to \$5.1 billion under the federal Energy Policy Act of 2005 that Congress adopted the previous month. However, President Bush only asked for a total appropriation of \$1.8 billion.

“Our effort is about helping people and serving our citizens,” said Governor Rendell. “**Stay Warm PA** is about our communities working together and people taking care of one another.”

As a part of the **Stay Warm PA** initiative, the Governor has asked for up to \$15 million in state money to supplement federal funds that may be insufficient to maintain LIHEAP, which served 350,000 Pennsylvania households last year, nearly one-third of whom were seniors. The Governor has also asked the state legislature to provide \$3 million to boost the state’s Homeowner Emergency Mortgage Assistance Program.

Participating organizations in today’s sessions included: AARP; AFL-CIO; United Way; Pennsylvania Council of Churches; Red Cross; Salvation Army; Pennsylvania Catholic Conference; Community Action Association of Pennsylvania; PSEA; NAACP; Pennsylvania ACORN; Pennsylvania League of Cities and Municipalities; County Commissioners Association; Association of Township Commissioners; Pennsylvania School Boards Association; Pennsylvania Jewish Federation; Pennsylvania Baptist Coalition; Governor’s Advisory Commission on African American Affairs; Governor’s Commission on Asian American Affairs; Governor’s Advisory Commission on Latino Affairs; Pennsylvania Rural Development Council; and Pennsylvania Commission on Women.

The Governor’s plan includes:

- Seeking additional federal LIHEAP money.
- Authorizing up to \$18 million in state resources, including \$15 million for LIHEAP and \$3 million for the Homeowner Emergency Mortgage Assistance Program.
- Asking energy companies to help low-income consumers meet their winter bills.
- Creating a partnership with home supply retailers to help seniors and others winterize.
- Marshaling families and friends to help take care of their homes to help lower winter heating bills.
- Convening a statewide **Stay Warm PA** summit with volunteers and religious organizations to protect the neediest citizens.
- Enabling the Energy Star sales tax holiday.
- Reducing the commonwealth’s energy use.
- Ensuring that poor families have a second chance to make energy payments before utilities are turned off.
- Removing hurdles for poor families seeking to reconnect fuel service.

For more information about **Stay Warm PA**, visit www.staywarmpa.com.