

**GOVERNOR RENDELL, 180 STAKEHOLDERS, WORK TO  
KEEP NEEDY PENNSYLVANIANS WARM THIS WINTER**

Groups Across State Come Together to Focus on Protecting State's Vulnerable Citizens in First-Ever Stay Warm PA Energy Summit

**11/2/2005: HARRISBURG** — With winter on the doorstep and home heating prices rising as fast as temperatures are falling, Governor Edward G. Rendell brought together nearly 180 stakeholders Tuesday to decide how to best help Pennsylvania's most vulnerable citizens pay their heating bills this winter.

Via a live statewide videoconference that connected seven locations, the Governor heard directly from local officials, community, religious, union and other leaders about regional efforts to address energy needs this winter.

The Governor's **Stay Warm PA** energy summit, moderated by members of Governor Rendell's cabinet, gave stakeholders a chance to put forth real solutions and share those ideas. The United Way, which had representatives at each location, has agreed to prepare a summary capturing the various regional activities and solutions.

"The people who are going to face energy challenges this winter have to know about what's available," Governor Rendell said. "If they don't, we are going to fall short of achieving our goal that, truly, everyone can stay warm in Pennsylvania this winter."

"Government can't do things for people on its own," the Governor said during the summit. "No matter how many resources the government has, we need participation from the private sector, from our civic sector, from our charitable sector and this is one effort."

The Governor's message rang true in Archbald, Lackawanna County, where United Neighborhood Center Executive Director Michael J. Hanley participated.

"This conference was about bringing resources together to forge a solution to a very serious problem confronting the most vulnerable Pennsylvanians," Hanley said. "We are already seeing the gathering clouds for the perfect storm. Families and senior citizens are making choices today between food on the table and fuel in the furnace. Where will they be in the dead of winter?"

The Governor's **Stay Warm PA** initiative, launched last month, will add an additional \$30 million this winter for low-income energy assistance.

Fred Griesbach, the state director for the Pennsylvania chapter of AARP, said in Harrisburg that he's optimistic the special gathering of stakeholders will work.

"You cannot bring together that many people without believing that some good will come of this. I do believe we are seeing a real, shared, commitment to make this work," Griesbach said.

"[The session] gave us a way to deal with the problem from a local to state level and everything in between; not just from our group but from all the groups involved," said Cynthia Brink, contract manager for the Berks Co. Office of Aging, who attended the working group at Colonial Intermediate Unit #20 in Easton.

The stakeholders agreed on many points at the summit, but the overarching goals included the designation of a single point of contact, with a toll-free telephone hotline, that people may call to get the information they need to stay warm this winter; the creation of a volunteer network for neighbors to keep an eye on neighbors who might be reluctant to seek help; and for increased state and federal funding.

Under **Stay Warm PA**, the Governor will ask for up to \$15 million in state money – a first for the commonwealth – to supplement federal funds that may be insufficient to maintain the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), which served 350,000 Pennsylvania households last year, nearly one-third of whom were seniors. He also is asking the legislature to provide \$3 million to boost the state’s Homeowner’s Emergency Mortgage Assistance Program (HEMAP).

The Governor met with utility CEOs and leaders of the fuel oil supply industry Tuesday and challenged them to increase enrollment in their Consumer Assistance Programs (CAP) and to take other steps to protect low-income, elderly and chronically ill customers.

Robert A. Raible agreed with the Governor on the need for private sector participation, saying the 43 community action agencies across the state know firsthand what’s at stake.

“We are the ones who actually see people where they live,” the executive director of the Warren-Forest Counties Economic Opportunity Council said, “and the Governor can use us to reach people.”

Besides the agencies, Raible said anyone can help make sure people in need survive this winter.

“I have an elderly neighbor we check on all the time,” he said.

As well as generating ideas to help people, the summit energized participants with a sense of team and a wider perspective.

“Today’s Summit certainly heightened the awareness of utility assistance programs in general, brought to light challenges that we will continue to address as a region, and provided a forum for sharing best practices of the many agencies and associations represented. It is clear that those who were here today are committed to working together to address the winter heating crisis,” said Community Action of Butler County’s Janine Kennedy, who participated in the working group at the School District of Pittsburgh Administration Building.

“The energy summit hosted by Governor Rendell is a giant leap forward in bringing our community and its resources together to do what we all do best – take care of those most in need,” said Gary Drapek, president of United Way of Lackawanna County. “The United Way of Lackawanna County applauds the Governor and his administration for taking the lead in helping to ensure the warmth and safety of the most vulnerable Pennsylvanians, namely our senior citizens and low-income families, during this impending heating crisis in the northeast.”

“Philadelphia recognizes that those who will be most directly impacted by the sudden surge in energy costs are those who are among our most vulnerable citizens,” said Celeste Zappala, executive director of Mayor John Street’s Commission on Services to the Aging, at the **Stay Warm PA** working group held in the Philadelphia Education Center on Broad Street. “Emerging from the summit, the most important thing we can do is assume responsibility for helping those who face the greatest challenges during this crisis; the elderly and poor.”

In Edinboro, Daniel J. Heher, the Erie-area manager for Penelec, said the **Stay Warm PA** summit has opened his eyes.

“This gives us some ideas of how we can be proactive with our customers,” Heher said.

And Leslie Osche of the United Way of Butler County said: “This event captured the collective experience and creativity of leaders in human services in order to develop a statewide plan for Keeping PA Warm and provided strategies for all to take back to many constituencies they represent.”

Governor Rendell said he was glad those attending the summit are willing to help.

“The idea for us is to find ways to harness that energy and enthusiasm and make it into a definitive program where we can make sure that no one falls through the cracks,” he said.

The following cabinet secretaries convened the regional meetings:

- Philadelphia – Department of Aging’s Nora Dowd Eisenhower
- Pittsburgh – Department of Community and Economic Development’s Dennis Yablonsky
- Johnstown – Department of Banking’s William Schenk
- Edinboro – Department of Labor and Industry’s Stephen Schmerin
- Archbald – Department of Environmental Protection’s Kathleen McGinty
- Easton – Department of Agriculture’s Dennis Wolff

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**EDITOR’S NOTE:** For a list of participants in the **Stay Warm PA** summit, please visit <http://www.governor.state.pa.us/governor/cwp/view.asp?a=3&q=443740>.