



WASHINGTON COUNTY COMMUNITY
ACTION ORGANIZATION

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*News
good letter*

December 9, 1981

Representative Vera Ketz
2068 N. W. Johnson
Portland, Oregon 97210

Dear Vera:

I am writing to you both as a constituent and as a worker affected by the Emergency Board's recent decision to reduce Low Income Energy Assistance Program's administrative funds from 10% to 7½%.

I have always shared your concern for keeping administrative costs in social programs at a minimal level. I am particularly concerned when administrative savings can be passed directly to those in need. I believe this was the intent of the Emergency Board's decision in regard to LIEAP. Unfortunately, because of the uniqueness of LIEAP I feel that this decision was extremely short sighted and may have an opposite effect of the one desired.

Referring to program operation funds in LIEAP as administrative costs is somewhat of a misnomer. In order to provide heating assistance to low income households, we have two options. Checks could be sent directly to every known low income household, or staff could be hired to locate and certify eligible households, recruit and train volunteer outreach workers to locate the homebound and "hidden needy", and to connect all applicants up with other badly needed energy services and information. As you know Congress has selected the second method.

Like other Community Action Agencies, WCCAO is mandated to serve the heating needs of eligible households in our service area. Unlike last year, we will be directly serving all AFS clients who apply. This has effectively double the number who will be seeking assistance from our program. Our administrative budget allows us the funds to hire staff necessary to serve the thousands of households who will be seeking help in a very short period of time. Last year WCCAO spent \$54,000. on staff and support costs to serve 3,024 low income households in Washington County with \$575,000 worth of heating assistance. This year we will have \$39,000. for staff who will need to serve at least 6,000 households with more than \$560,000. of assistance. The 2½% savings in administrative funds presumably will be available to serve additional household needs in our area. However, with only 7½% available to us in administrative funds our program will for all practice purposes close down February 28, 1982 regardless of how much heating assistance money remains. Clearly, without funds for staff, phones, lights and office space we have no means to operate our LIEAP program.

probably not true as some of our 3,000 food stamp people spend



Annually, we attempt to maximize our administrative dollars by training and utilizing a dozen or so outreach volunteers who do intake for the homebound and at Senior Centers. While these volunteers have been critical to our programs success, we could not effectively replace all staff with volunteer workers. Last of all, the entry level salary at WCCAO for LIEAP intake counselors is \$835.00 a month. Nearly all of our LIEAP employees were previously unemployed living under or close to poverty themselves.

I have appreciated very much your legislative work and am hopeful that with this additional information you will help us to resolve this dilemma that is faced by Oregon LIEAP programs. In an attempt to provide more money to needy households, the Emergency Board has unfortunately handicapped our ability to serve even as many households as we have in the past. Please don't hesitate to contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Jerralynn Ness
Program Director II

CC Ellen Schneider, Manager, SCSP
Gordon Molitor, WCCAO Executive Director
JN/pk