
SENATE BILL 5717

State of Washington

57th Legislature

2001 Regular Session

By Senators Brown, T. Sheldon, Fraser, Regala, Kline, Franklin, Winsley, Kohl-Welles, Shin, McAuliffe, Spanel, Costa, B. Sheldon and Rasmussen

Read first time 01/31/2001. Referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

1 AN ACT Relating to the low-income energy assistance program;
2 creating a new section; making an appropriation; and declaring an
3 emergency.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that:

6 (1) The state is experiencing dramatic increases in the costs of
7 electricity and natural gas, with increases averaging between thirty
8 and seventy percent, as a result of many factors out of the state's
9 direct control.

10 (2) These unprecedented price increases have a disproportionate
11 impact on the low-income citizens of the state because energy costs
12 comprise a larger percentage of their available resources than families
13 with moderate and higher incomes and approximately seventy-five percent
14 of low-income homes use electric heat.

15 (3) Every year, the state's low-income energy assistance program
16 exhausts its resources before the end of the heating season.
17 Typically, only seventeen percent of the eligible population is served
18 in an average year.

1 (4) Requests for assistance are expected to increase by over forty
2 percent this winter, and the amount of heating assistance each
3 household will need will also rise.

4 (5) While the state has received emergency allocations from the
5 federal government, the combined circumstances of increased need for
6 help and the increased cost of energy make it likely that, even with
7 the emergency federal assistance, fewer citizens will be served.

8 The legislature therefore intends to provide immediate assistance
9 to help mitigate the adverse consequences of this winter's rate
10 increases on Washington's low-income citizens.

11 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** The sum of two million dollars, or as much
12 thereof as may be necessary, is appropriated from the general fund to
13 the department of community, trade, and economic development for the
14 fiscal year ending June 30, 2001, for the low-income home energy
15 assistance program.

16 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** This act is necessary for the immediate
17 preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the
18 state government and its existing public institutions, and takes effect
19 immediately.

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