

PROVIDING FOR A CONDITIONAL
ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE
OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H. Con. Res. 279, received from the House.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 279) providing for conditional adjournment of the House of Representatives.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the concurrent resolution be agreed to, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, without any intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 279) was agreed to.

INDIAN HEALTH CARE IMPROVE-
MENT ACT AMENDMENTS OF
2007—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mrs. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I wished to echo the comments of my colleague and my chairman on the Indian Affairs Committee. Reauthorization of this Indian Health Care Improvement Act is something that is long overdue. When we sat down as the chairman and vice chairman of this committee to assess the priorities of the committee, it was absolutely clear the one thing we could do now to help make a difference in the lives of American Indians and Alaska Natives was to improve the health care system, the delivery, and the access.

The last time this was updated, if you will, was 1992. Think about what has happened in health care and the technologies and the techniques since 1992. We owe it to our constituents across the country—not just in Alaska, where we have 225 tribes, but from California to Maine, from the Dakotas down to Florida—we owe it to all our constituents to finally see this reauthorization through. We do acknowledge there are some issues that are as yet unresolved, but it is not as if we have not had the time to resolve them. The time is now to make it happen.

I, too, would urge the Senate to work together, as the chairman and I have, in a very cooperative, very bipartisan manner to figure out how we move this legislation through the Senate to the House so it is finally enacted into law.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

AMENDMENT NO. 3900

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside so I can send an amendment to the desk, and I ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Vermont [Mr. SANDERS], for himself, Mr. OBAMA, Ms. CANTWELL, Mr. KERRY, Ms. SNOWE, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. SUNUNU, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. LEAHY, Mrs. CLINTON, and Mr. KENNEDY, proposes an amendment numbered 3900.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the amendment be considered as read.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To provide for payments under subsections (a) through (e) of section 2604 of the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Act of 1981)

At the end of title II, insert the following:

SEC. 2. LOW-INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—There are authorized to be appropriated, and there are appropriated, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated—

(1) \$400,000,000 (to remain available until expended) for making payments under subsections (a) through (d) of section 2604 of the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Act of 1981 (42 U.S.C. 8623); and

(2) \$400,000,000 (to remain available until expended) for making payments under section 2604(e) of the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Act of 1981 (42 U.S.C. 8623(e)), notwithstanding the designation requirement of section 2602(e) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 8621(e)).

(b) DESIGNATION.—Any amount provided under subsection (a) is designated as an emergency requirement and necessary to meet emergency needs pursuant to subsections (a) and (b) of section 204 of S. Con. Res. 21 (110th Congress), the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2008.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, let me begin by saying this amendment is being cosponsored by Senators SNOWE, COLLINS, OBAMA, CANTWELL, SUNUNU, MENENDEZ, STABENOW, CLINTON, LEAHY, and KERRY. This amendment, which would increase LIHEAP funding by \$800 million, also has the support of the National Energy Assistance Directors Association, the National Fuel Funds Network, the American Gas Association, the National Association of State Energy Officials, and many other groups.

This amendment is as simple and straightforward as it can be, and what it is about is that at a time when, as everybody knows, home heating prices are going through the roof, it is getting colder every day—it will be below zero in Vermont this week—this amendment would provide real relief to millions of senior citizens on fixed incomes, low-income families with children, and persons with disabilities.

Specifically, this amendment would provide \$800 million emergency funding for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, otherwise known as LIHEAP. Four hundred million dollars of this funding would be distributed under the regular LIHEAP formula and the other \$400 million would be used under the contingency LIHEAP program.

Last month, I introduced the Keeping Americans Warm Act to provide \$1 bil-

lion in emergency LIHEAP funding. I am pleased that this bill has garnered 26 cosponsors—19 Democrats, 6 Republicans, and 1 Independent.

In addition, as you know, on December 3, 38 Senators cosigned a letter spearheaded by Senator JACK REED and SUSAN COLLINS to the Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman HARKIN and Ranking Member SPECTER urging the appropriations committee to provide a total of \$3.4 billion in LIHEAP funding.

As you know, there is a lot of discussion right now in seeing that there be a substantial increase in LIHEAP funding in the economic stimulus bill that is being talked about, which I certainly support.

I would also like to take this opportunity to commend Subcommittee Chairman HARKIN, Ranking Member SPECTER, Appropriations Chairman BYRD, and Ranking Member COCHRAN for providing a total of \$2.6 billion in funding for LIHEAP in the Omnibus appropriations bill. I understand how difficult it was to reach a deal on this bill. I appreciate everything Senator BYRD and others have done for LIHEAP to make sure people in our country do not go cold.

Unfortunately, this \$2.6 billion in funding for LIHEAP, while an 18-percent increase from last year, is still 23 percent below what was provided for LIHEAP just 2 years ago. And that 23-percent reduction is not even adjusted for inflation. I am talking about nominal dollars.

Two years ago, as I think every American fully understands, the price of heating oil was less than \$2.50 a gallon. Today, it is over \$3.36 a gallon. In central Vermont, we have seen prices as high as \$3.73 a gallon for heating oil. This winter, consumers are projected to pay over \$1,800 to heat their homes with heating oil—\$1,800 just to stay warm this winter. This winter, it is projected that consumers will be paying over \$1,600 to heat their homes with propane. Two years ago, they only paid \$1,281.

The skyrocketing prices are already stretching the household budgets of millions of families with children, senior citizens on fixed incomes, and persons with disabilities beyond the breaking point. I cannot tell you—I am sure the situation is not radically different in Pennsylvania—how many people are telling me that when they see these heating bills, they cannot believe it. They just do not know how they are going to stay warm this winter.

Unfortunately, the spike in energy costs is completely eviscerating the purchasing power of this extremely important program in State after State. If Congress does not act soon to confront this problem head-on—and this is a problem which is existing now and will get worse in late January and in February—I fear for the public health and safety of many of our most vulnerable citizens.

The point is, we have to act. We have to act. I support any and all efforts to