

IN 1978, THE INCREASE IN FUEL UTILITY BILLS BY ITSELF, CAUSED LOW-INCOME FAMILIES TO LOSE \$8 BILLION IN PURCHASING POWER, NATION-WIDE. THOSE WHO ARGUE THAT HIGHER PRICES INDUCE CONSERVATION IGNORE THE FACT THAT MOST LOW-INCOME AND POOR FAMILIES HAVE TAKEN EVERY MEASURE POSSIBLE TO CONSERVE ENERGY.

FOR THE LAST THREE YEARS, CONGRESS HAS PROVIDED \$200 MILLION, TO ASSIST LOW-INCOME FAMILIES PAY THEIR FUEL BILLS. BUT WHILE NEARLY 3 MILLION PEOPLE USED THE EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM LAST YEAR, AND ONE-HALF MILLION SUBSTANDARD HOMES HAVE BEEN WEATHERIZED, THE OVERALL PROGRAM, IS TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE.

AGAIN THIS YEAR, LEGISLATION HAS BEEN INTRODUCED DESIGNED TO ALLEVIATE THE BURDEN OF RISING UTILITY COSTS ON THOSE LOW AND MODERATE INCOME FAMILIES. THE F.U.E.L.S. PROGRAM IS INTENDED TO PROVIDE IMMEDIATE RELIEF TO THOSE HOUSEHOLDS WHOSE UTILITY COSTS HAVE RISEN TO THE POINT WHERE THEY NOW PAY AN INORDINATE AMOUNT OF THEIR INCOMES FOR NECESSARY UTILITIES.

WITH THE COST OF EVERYTHING GOING UP, MANY AMERICANS JUST CANNOT HANDLE AN INCREASE IN FUEL BILLS, AND THAT IS WHY THE F.U.E.L.S. PROGRAM WOULD BE AVAILABLE ON A VOLUNTEER BASIS TO ALL LOW AND MODERATE INCOME HOUSEHOLDS WHOSE INCOME TOTALS ARE BELOW PRESCRIBED GUIDELINES.

I CO-SPONSORED THIS MEASURE, BECAUSE I BELIEVE IT IS A PROGRESSIVE AND EFFICIENT SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM. HOWEVER, THE REAL PROBLEM EXISTS IN KEEPING THE DOWN THE COSTS OF ENERGY.

RECENTLY, MANY UTILITY COMMISSIONS HAVE PERMITTED THE USE OF FUEL ADJUSTMENT CLAUSES AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE MORE DIFFICULT AND

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TIME-CONSUMING TASKS OF CONSIDERING RATE INCREASE REQUESTS IN FORMAL HEARINGS.

A SENATE COMMITTEE REPORT NOTES THAT CONSUMERS PAID \$13.4 BILLION MORE FOR ELECTRICITY AND NATURAL GAS IN 1977 THAN THEY DID IN 1976. OVER 80 PERCENT OF THIS INCREASE IS DIRECTLY ATTRIBUTABLE TO FUEL ADJUSTMENT CLAUSES, SOMETIMES REFERRED TO AS PURCHASE GAS ADJUSTMENTS IN GAS UTILITIES.

EFFORTS ARE PRESENTLY UNDER WAY IN CONGRESS TO MAKE THE ONLY WAY UTILITIES WOULD BE ALLOWED TO INCREASE THEIR RATES WOULD BE BY JUSTIFYING THEIR RATE HIKES AT PUBLIC HEARINGS.

IN THE LONG RUN HOWEVER, THE COST FOR ENERGY IN THIS COUNTRY WILL ONLY BE REDUCED, WHEN THE DEPENDENCE ON FOREIGN SOURCES OF ENERGY ARE REDUCED.