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**News Release - For Immediate Release**

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**Governor, Congressional Delegation Try to Stave Off Cuts to Oregon's Low-Income Weatherization Assistance Program**

**(Salem, Oregon) April 17, 2007** – Governor Ted Kulongoski and members of Oregon's congressional delegation have urged the Bush administration not to carry out its plan to slash funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and the federal Weatherization Assistance Program.

In a letter to the congressional leadership in February, the Governor noted that the LIHEAP program provides important help to low-income households, the elderly, disabled and families who make tough financial choices like paying for groceries, prescription drugs or utility bills.

The Governor praised Oregon Senator Ron Wyden, and U.S. Representatives Earl Blumenauer, Darlene Hooley, Peter DeFazio and David Wu for protesting the administration's plan to cut the Weatherization Program by \$38 million. "The federal government must not back away from its partnership with Oregon and other states—a partnership that provides help to vulnerable, hard-working families who can't afford to weatherize their homes and still put meals on the table," Kulongoski said. "It's a matter of doing what's right."

The Bush Administration recently revised the Energy Department's 2007 spending plan to 14 percent from the local weatherization program managed by Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS).

Earlier this month, Senator Wyden and Representatives Blumenauer, Hooley, and Wu signed a letter sent to Secretary of Energy Sam Bodman and Office of Management and Budget Director Rob Portman, urging them to maintain or increase the weatherization program as authorized in the 2005 Energy Policy Act. Representative Peter DeFazio also supported this effort.

"We hope Congress will reverse this cut before the year moves very far," said Dan Elliott, Oregon's Weatherization Assistance Program Manager. "We are grateful for Senator Wyden, who co-sponsored the amendment. We're also grateful to Representatives Blumenauer, Hooley, Wu and DeFazio's commitment to the low-income energy consumers in

our state. We appreciate their effort to prevent these cuts, and we are confident they will do everything in their power to turn this decision around.”

After the Energy Department announced the cuts, the Senate amended the Iraq war supplemental emergency spending bill, instructing the Secretary of Energy to restore the program to nearly 2006 levels with funds originally designated for this purpose. However, with the fate of the supplemental spending bill caught between the White House and Congress, the future of Oregon weatherization assistance program is uncertain.

Local agencies and contractors weatherize low-income households and upgrade heating systems each year. The Department of Energy estimates these investments reduce energy use by 20 to 30 percent for at least two decades and lower home energy bills an average of \$358 each year after the improvements are made.

“Until a few weeks ago, Oregon anticipated full funding for the weatherization program year, which begins April 1,” Elliott said. “Our weatherization crews are ready to go, and we are prepared to weatherize as many homes this year as last. Now we’re unsure how the federal funding situation will affect us. If these cuts are not reversed, there will be many disappointed families and households in Oregon who are currently on weatherization waiting lists.”

For more information on the OHCS low-income weatherization program, contact Dan Elliot at 503-986-2016 or email [dan.elliott@hcs.state.or.us](mailto:dan.elliott@hcs.state.or.us).

OHCS is the State’s housing finance agency and community services program administrator. The Department provides financial and program support to create and preserve opportunities for quality, affordable housing for Oregonians of lower and moderate income and administers federal and state antipoverty, homeless, energy assistance and community service programs. The OHCS mission is to "Reach out for opportunities to create partnerships that improve Oregonians' lives, and the quality of our communities." For more information, visit our web site at [www.ohcs.oregon.gov](http://www.ohcs.oregon.gov).