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Washington State Oil Marketers Encourage Support for Legislation to Help Poor Pay High Heating and Cooling Bills

July 28, 2008 (Seattle, WA) – The Washington Oil Marketers Association (WOMA) and the Pacific Northwest Oil Heat Council (PNOC) commend Washington Senator Maria Cantwell (D) for her active support of legislation to boost funding for a federal program that helps low-income families pay their heating and cooling bills.

In a rare Saturday session on July 26, 2008, Senator Cantwell was one of 50 senators who voted to support the bill which fell short of the 60 votes needed to limit debate and move it to final passage.

The legislation would have doubled money for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, commonly known as LIHEAP, to \$5.1 billion. If the bill had passed, an additional \$17 million would have gone to low-income Washingtonians struggling to pay their heating and cooling bills.

“As the costs of home heating oil, natural gas and electricity soar, thousands of Washingtonians are struggling to keep warm in winter and cool in summer. In this tough economic climate, increased funding for LIHEAP just makes sense,” said Lea Wilson, executive director of the Washington Oil Marketers Association and Pacific Northwest Oil Heat Council.

Low-income families spend on average 15 percent of their income on home energy bills, compared with 3.4 percent for all other households. LIHEAP helped close to six million households nationwide last year, but the demand is growing as energy costs rise. Accordingly, the average LIHEAP grant has dropped nationally from \$349 to \$305.

“LIHEAP helps families who are in danger of losing their ability to heat and cool their homes in spite of scrimping on key purchases such as food and medicine. Our association urges elected representatives to pass a bill to increase LIHEAP funding,” added Wilson.

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About the Washington Oil Marketers Association (WOMA) and the Pacific Northwest Oil Heat Council (PNOC)

The Washington Oil Marketers Association (WOMA) is a non-profit trade association which protects the business interests of heating oil dealers, petroleum distributors, jobbers and transporters throughout Washington State. The Pacific Northwest Oil Heat Council (PNOC) was founded in 1942 and merged with WOMA in 2005 to pursue mutual legislative interests.