



Maine
Philanthropy
Center

Turning Up the Heat on Maine's Energy Crisis: Philanthropy's Role in Creating Local Solutions

Hilton Garden Inn, Freeport
September 29, 2008

Energy Forum Summary

More than 50 grantmakers gathered on September 29 to hear from a broad array of government and community leaders about what is being done around the state to address the energy-related challenges facing Maine this winter. The day included a keynote address by former Governor, Angus King, and presentations by a wide array of speakers involved in housing, fuel assistance, relief services, and community organizing. The program was organized to inform the philanthropic community about the efforts already underway and to share ideas on how philanthropy might play a role in helping initiatives succeed.

The keynote address was presented by **Angus King**, who is now a principal of Independence Wind, LLC. Governor King began by noting Maine's high dependence on fossil fuels -- electricity from natural gas, heating oil and gasoline -- which now represent 87% of our overall energy consumption (all imported from sources outside the state). He pointed out the strong corresponding relationship between growth in GDP and energy use, and predicted that rapid GDP growth in developing countries like China and India, will accelerate the demand for oil and continue to drive an increase in market prices. He cautioned that with energy already consuming a much greater proportion of the average household budget in Maine - increasing from about 4% in 1988 to as much as 18-20% today - the stress on low- and moderate-income families and seniors on fixed incomes is particularly difficult. If Mainers do not begin to embrace efforts to reduce energy consumption and wean off fossil fuels in favor of renewable energy sources, he warned that it is entirely possible that over the next 15-20 years Maine could become too expensive for most people to inhabit during the colder months and that it would become a summer destination.

Governor King provided a series of funding recommendations for the philanthropic sector to consider.

In the short term he identified these priorities:

- supporting weatherization efforts in each region;
- underwriting energy audits;
- creating a revolving loan fund (administered by utilities or FAME) to enable people to upgrade their home's weatherization based on audit results;
- pooling resources for greater impact;
- providing incentives for people to obtain meters to track gasoline consumption to change driving behavior;
- funding low-cost energy conservation materials (e.g. low flow shower heads, set-back thermometers, etc.);
- creating a neighbor-to-neighbor program to ensure that everyone keeps warm this winter.

Intermediate term efforts might include:

- ensuring that building codes promote energy efficiency;
- providing a subsidy for high-mileage vehicles rather than a gas-guzzler tax;
- using teleconferencing to save the cost and impact of travel for face-to-face meetings.

Long term goals should address:

- dealing with the nuclear waste issue;
- funding positions to help focus and coordinate cross-sector efforts like the off-shore wind project;
- supporting the exploration of alternative energy sources.

Following the keynote address, **Meredith Jones**, *Vice President* of the Maine Community Foundation and current *Chair* of the Maine Philanthropy Center, moderated a panel presentation that provided a statewide overview of major energy-related activities.

- **John Kerry**, *Director* of the Governor's Office of Energy Independence and Security, highlighted the recommendations of the Governor's Pre-Emergency Energy Task Force and work underway to strengthen fundraising activities on behalf of the Keep Maine Warm Fund
- **Kathy Poulin**, *Special Projects Coordinator* at MaineHousing, outlined the anticipated increase in the number of LIHEAP recipients (from 50k to 78k) during 2008-09 as a result of the expansion of eligibility guidelines and the likely action by Congress to double federal funds. The average household benefit likely will remain in the \$550-\$600 range, covering only about 18% of the average winter heating bill. She described MaineHousing's programs that will fund 2,000 winterization kits and be distributed to local volunteer groups through the UMaine Extension; provide free heating system cleanings, tune-ups and repairs through local oil dealers; weatherize more than 1,500 homes annually through Community Action Agencies and other providers; and support heating system conversion to alternative energy sources
- **Suzanne McCormick**, *President* of People's Regional Opportunity Program (PROP), highlighted the programs sponsored by Maine's ten Community Action Agencies, along with 2-1-1 Maine, and described the evolution of the Keep ME Warm Fuel and Food Campaign that this year will distribute emergency fuel and food assistance through both CAAs and local United Ways, as well as channel funds to longer-term energy conservation programs
- **Rob Brown**, *Executive Director* of Opportunity Maine, described efforts underway to examine how best to develop Maine's education and career ladder in the energy sector and he summarized a pilot program in the mid-coast area that brings together the Bath Regional Vocational Center, Habitat for Humanity, MaineHousing, AFL-CIO and others to enable students to gain certification in energy auditing and home weatherization
- **Betsy Biemann**, *President* of Maine Technology Institute, outlined the roles that MTI plays in helping to provide seed capital and technical support for the development and commercialization of new technologies within industry clusters, including in the field of alternative energy, and she offered a vision of numerous ways that philanthropy could be involved, including supporting the global ocean energy conference that will take place in Maine in June 2009.

Janet Henry, *President* of the Maine Philanthropy Center, then introduced seven individuals who each presented "speed reports" illustrating local initiatives across Maine:

- **Claudia Stevens**, United Way of Aroostook, described three broad-based community forums held in different parts of Aroostook County and promoted a pilot project to replace outdated oil furnaces with pellet stoves for 20 low-income families
- **Martha Muldoon**, Kennebunk Savings Bank, described plans underway between the Bank and United Way of York County to bring businesses together in mid-October to explore ways to collaborate, pooling resources where possible to meet the energy needs of low-income families and seniors
- **Bill Brilliant**, Downeast Energy, reported on a community energy meeting convened by United Way of Mid Coast Maine that drew nearly 100 people representing a wide cross section of

organizations. Groups now are working on making homes more energy efficient; ensuring the safety of vulnerable neighbors; responding to emergencies; and gathering and disseminating information

- **Mary Kate Reny**, Renys Department Store, spoke of the work of the Lincoln County Energy Task Force that is helping to weatherize homes and provide emergency fuel assistance, as well as joining with groups like the Midcoast Green Collaborative to promote energy conservation
- **Rev. Susan Crane**, Franklin County Ecumenical Heating Fund, outlined the collective efforts of churches in Franklin County to expand a joint emergency fuel fund, strengthen volunteer efforts to assist low-income families and seniors and monitor their well being, and explore the feasibility of creating warming shelters
- **Gradette Hatala**, William and Joan Alford Foundation, described a recent \$100,000 gift from the Foundation to Kennebec Valley Community Action that will provide comprehensive weatherization for 15 LIHEAP-eligible homeowners, install pellet stoves for two of the recipients, and extend emergency heating assistance for 35 families
- **Kathy Crossman**, United Way of Eastern Maine, summarized the achievements of the Eastern Maine Funders' *Energy Initiative* in raising over \$1.1 million for weatherization, emergency fuel assistance and heating system tune-ups over the past three years. Recently, the *Energy Initiative* has created a "Neighbors Helping Neighbors" small grant fund to engage and mobilize community-based teams to assist those who are most at risk this winter from the challenges caused by high fuel prices.

During the final segment, **Eric Buch**, *Energy Forum Coordinator* with the Maine Philanthropy Center, presented a PowerPoint summary of ten project outlines provided to Maine grantmakers for their funding consideration. They included:

1. **Keep ME Warm Fuel and Food Campaign**
(United Ways of Maine / Maine Community Action Association)
2. **Maine Food Security Project**
(Good Shepherd Food-Bank)
3. **Energy Conservation Education Program**
(University of Maine Extension)
4. **Clean, Tune and Evaluate (CTE) Low Income Heating Systems**
(MaineHousing)
5. **30-Year Heat Assistance Using Tankless Solar Systems**
(MaineHousing / Ascendant Energy Company)
6. **Chewonki 350**
(Chewonki Foundattion);
7. **Will Work for Heat**
(Opportunity Maine)
8. **Maine HEARTH – Home Energy Aid & Response Team Help**
(Maine Commission for Community Service)
9. **Solar Assisted Heat Pump Demonstration**
(MaineHousing / Ascendant Energy Company)
10. **Ocean Energy Cluster Development in Maine** (lead organization still TBD).

Copies of the written project outlines were provided to attendees and are posted on the Maine Philanthropy Center's website (www.mainephilanthropy.org).