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CARDIN CO-SPONSORS BILL TO HELP LOW-INCOME FAMILIES STAY WARM THIS WINTER

WASHINGTON – **U.S. Senator Benjamin L. Cardin Cardin** (D-MD), has co-sponsored the *Emergency Energy Assistance Act of 2008* to provide emergency assistance to low-income and working families who are struggling to make ends meet in the face of escalating energy prices.

The legislation consists of three components: a temporary increase in the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) for 2008, full funding of the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) as well as full funding for the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP).

“We have all felt the pain of high energy costs, but it presents a real danger to low-income families who may face a winter without heat,” said **Senator Cardin**. “I have co-sponsored this bill because we cannot allow American families to go without heat this coming winter, and this measure offers critical assistance to those who need help to heat their homes.”

The first component of this legislation is a temporary increase in the EITC for 2008. The EITC is a refundable tax credit for low-income working families. Low-income households are bearing the burden of escalating energy costs, yet the majority of these beneficiaries did not receive the full rebates provided through the Economic Stimulus Act of 2008. The bill would increase the maximum credit amount by \$300 for 2008. By increasing the credit amount, more families will be eligible for the credit than under current law. Beneficiaries will receive the increased EITC when they file their 2008 tax returns.

In addition, the bill would provide full funding for 2008 for two critically important programs that provide support to low-income households: LIHEAP and WAP. It would increase FY08 LIHEAP levels by \$2.53 billion, increasing total LIHEAP funding to \$5.1 billion, the fully authorized level for FY08. Similarly, the bill would increase FY08 Weatherization Assistance Program levels by \$522.8 million, raising the total weatherization funding to \$750 million, the fully authorized level for FY08.

The legislation was co-sponsored by Senators John Kerry (D-MA), Edward Kennedy (D-MA), Christopher Dodd (D-CT), Joseph Lieberman (I-CT), Robert Menendez (D-NJ), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) and Maria Cantwell (D-WA).

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