

Highlights in this issue:	
Renter's Rebate	p 1
Families affected by TFA Rules ...	p 1
TANF Reauthorization	p 2
Legislative Update	p 3
Good News -Food Stamp Prog. ...	p 3

CABHN FEVER

Keeping Your Utility Service

Now that the winter protection from having your utilities turned off is over, here's some information about your rights and what you can do to keep your utilities on during the coming months.

Whenever possible, **contact the utility company before** your utility service is **shut off**. It is easier to keep utility service on than to get it turned back on after a shut-off.

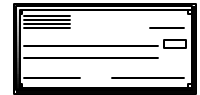
If you receive a shut-off notice, and then make payments that are at least 20% of the amount you owe, a gas, electric or water company must give you **another** written notice that it plans to shut off your service. (This applies to companies except municipal utilities like Norwich Electric).

Life-threatening Shut-Offs. If your life (or the life of someone who lives in your home) would be threatened if you did not have utility service, electric and gas companies may not shut off your service. These companies may also not refuse to turn on your service. This shut-off protection is for any time of the year—no matter how much money you owe to the company. A doctor must write a letter stating that your situation is life-threatening. You must still make payments, but the companies cannot shut off your service if you don't.

Payment Agreements. If you owe money to a gas or electric company, you are entitled to a "reasonable" payment agreement. This payment agreement lets you pay off what you owe over time while you avoid a shut-off or even get your service turned back on. After you have made a payment agreement, **make your payments on time**. If your financial situation changes, the agreement can be changed. If you can't make a payment,



Elderly & Disabled May Get Rebate Check for Rent & Utilities



You may be able to get a rebate check from the State through the "Renters' Rebate Program". The amount of your rebate depends on your income and amount of rent and utility bills. The rebate check can be from **\$50 to \$900**. There is **NO** application fee and there are **NO** asset limits.

You may be able to get this rebate if you . . .

- are over 65 years old; **or**
- are over 50 years old and are the surviving spouse of someone who was eligible at the time of his/her death; **or**
- are permanently and totally disabled and 18 years of age or older;

AND, you must. . .

- have lived in Connecticut for one year or more; **and**
- rent an apartment, a room, a mobile home, or live in cooperative housing; **and**
- have an income below \$25,400/year if you are single or a combined income below \$31,100/year if you are married.

How to Apply: Apply between **May 15** and **September 15** at your town's Social Services Department or Assessor's Office. Rebates can be for up to \$900 for married couples and \$700 for single people. *For more information, call Infoline at 211 or your town hall.* ♦

Housing Options 2002

If you are interested in owning your own home, come and learn how to get a mortgage, keep your home once you own, and what options are available to people 55+. This free program is on Saturday, May 18th, 10-3 pm, at the East Hartford Community Cultural Center, 50 Chapman Pl. Information, call Glastonbury Social Services at 860-652-7638. *Sponsored by: Journal Inquirer, CHFA, Savings Bank of Manchester, Sentry Real Estate, Sovereign Bank, Century 21, People's Bank, & Rockville Bank. Presented by the towns of Manchester, East Hartford, Vernon, Glastonbury, South Windsor & the Capitol Region Council of Governments.* ♦

contact the utility company right away to make other arrangements or your service can be shut-off.

For more information, call Statewide Legal Services at 1-800-453-3320.

More Families Reach Time Limits Without Jobs

The new TFA rules strictly limiting how long families can receive cash assistance took effect on October 1, 2002. Most families who must follow the TFA work requirements can only get three extensions of cash benefits and those who must follow the work requirements can only get 60 months of cash benefits.

According to DSS (Dept. of Social Services), between Oct.1 and March 1, 2002, **483 families (with 1,294 children) lost benefits because of the 60-month time limit**. Of these 483 families, only 221 (46%) were working full or part time when they lost benefits. **AND 616 families lost benefits because of the 3-extension limit** between November 1 and March 1, 2002, according to DSS estimates. *(For a more detailed report, call Debbie at CABHN).* ♦

Conference - May 23rd
Impact of Welfare Reform on Families & Children

Join us to hear about recently released studies of how welfare reform has impacted the lives of low-income families and children in Connecticut. Thursday, May 23, 8:30 am - 3 pm at the Legislative Office Building, Room 1E, Hartford. Sponsored by the Welfare Working Group.

Morning presentations will include: MDRC-Welfare Policies Matter for Children & Youth: Lessons for TANF Reauthorization; JobsFirst: Final Report on CT Welfare Reform. Harvard University-The Project on Global Working Families. Yale University-The Growing up in Poverty Project.

Following lunch on your own from 12-1, will be presentations on national and state perspectives on TANF.

There is no cost, but registration is required. To register, send your contact information to Katherine 860-278-5688 x19; fax 860-278-2957; or by email at larguest1@larcc.org. ♦



On the Web

CABHN & LARCC (Legal Assistance Resource Center of Connecticut) are on the web. Please visit us at www.larcc.org. ♦

Working Together... we can find a better way!

We hope CABHNFever has helped you stay informed. Join CABHN today for \$30* and receive a copy of **Mapping Change**, the latest summary of changes affecting low-income people.

Yes, let's work together!

Send your donation today!

Make check payable to CABHN and send to 80 Jefferson St., Hartford, CT 06106

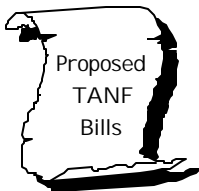
*plus \$3 shipping/handling
Donations are not tax-deductable.

On the Federal Level: TANF Reauthorization Bills

Reauthorization remains a hot topic in DC. Key points from the proposed bills are outlined below.

■ **HR 3113-TANF Reauthorization Act of 2001.** Author: Rep. Patsy Mink, D-HI.

Bill Summary: Retains emphasis on work and a five-year lifetime limit; repeals the caseload reduction credit and the illegitimacy bonus and replaces them with a poverty reduction credit for states; directs work efforts to permanent and high wage employment opportunities through post-education, training and targeting high wage jobs; provides work supports including child care; counts caring for a child under 6 years old as meeting the work requirement; restores full access to qualified immigrants.



■ **HR 4090 - The Personal Responsibility, Work and**

Family Promotion Act. Author: Rep. Wally Herger, R-CA.

Bill Summary: Increases the work requirement: states are required to have 70% of welfare families working and participating in other job preparation activities 40 hours per week in FY 2007. First 24 hours are limited to subsidized or unsubsidized employment, on the job training, supervised work experience or community service. Retains credit for caseload declines. Reflects the President's plan to direct up to \$300 million annually for programs that encourage healthy, stable marriages.

■ **HR 4092-Working Towards Independence Act.** Author: Rep. Howard McKeon, R-CA.

Bill Summary: Requires recipients to be engaged in work activities 40 hours a week and limits education, full-time substance abuse treatment and rehabilitative services that count toward work requirement. Increases the percentage of families that must be engaged in work-related activities to 70% by 2007. Maintains a modified caseload reduction credit.

■ **HR 4210-From Poverty to Promise.** Author: Rep. Marge Roukema, R-NJ.

Bill Summary: Makes poverty

reduction an explicit goal of TANF, increases funding for TANF to account for inflation, expands access to education and training, softens TANF time limits.

■ **HR 3625 - The Next Step in Reforming Welfare Act.** Author: Rep. Ben Cardin, D-MD.

Bill Summary: Increases TANF funding levels to account for inflation in future years, gives states bonuses for reducing child poverty, limits education to only 24 months of vocation education, provides for a \$100 million Family Formation Fund, partially restores benefits to legal immigrants.

TANF Reauthorization Timeline

House of Representatives:

Week of April 29: Consideration of bills passed out of subcommittees by full House Ways & Means Committee (Herger bill) and Education & Workforce Committee (McKeon bill). *Early to mid May:* Full House vote on TANF Reauthorization bill.

Senate:

Week of May 15: Finance Committee bill finalized. *May 22:* Vote on reauthorization bill in Finance Committee scheduled. *June:* Full Senate vote on TANF Reauthorization bill.

House and Senate:

July: Conference Committee to consolidate House and Senate bills. *August:* Final House and Senate action on TANF Reauthorization bill.

For more information or to find out how to get involved, call Debbie at CABHN 860-278-5688 x 12.



House Democrats	1-800-842-1902
House Republicans	1-800-842-1423
Senate Democrats	1-800-842-1420
Senate Republicans	1-800-842-1421
Governor's Office	1-800-406-1527

Legislative Update

By the time you get this newsletter, things at the legislature will probably have changed but here's an update as of April 26. For the latest information, check e-mails from Deborah Noble or the LARCC (Legal Assistance Resource Center of CT) web site at www.larcc.org.

Most of the issues CABHN members have identified as important are caught up in the budget negotiations. As of today, the House and Senate have passed a budget that includes a temporary income tax surcharge of 1% on incomes over \$1 million. The Governor has said he will veto a budget that includes this tax, but the bill has not yet reached his desk. Bills to implement those items included in the budget have not yet been addressed by the legislature and probably will not be until a budget is passed. (See *T-RAP & Food Stamp articles this page.*)

Temporary Family Assistance

- Open Safety Net to families who lose benefits at 60 months or at end of 3rd extension--there was support for this in the Human Services and Appropriations Committee, but it is unclear whether adequate funding for this expansion is in the current budget proposals.

- Suspend time limits for families during rising or high unemployment--bill did not get out of Appropriations; funding not in current budget proposals.

SAGA Medical

Governor proposed ending coverage for eye care, home health care, medical equipment (including rented wheel chairs), and services not provided by a physician for people receiving medical care through SAGA. It is unclear what is in the current budget proposal, but we have heard that coverage is eliminated for eye care, home health care, and services not provided by a physician.

HUSKY A Health Insurance

The latest budget proposal includes premiums and co-pays but no expansion. Parents with incomes between 100% and 150% of federal poverty would pay a \$15 monthly premium and co-pays for prescriptions and office visits (currently free).

continued next column



Future of Housing Proposals Is Uncertain

The continuing fight over the budget has resulted in the loss of some housing bills and has raised questions about the fate of others.

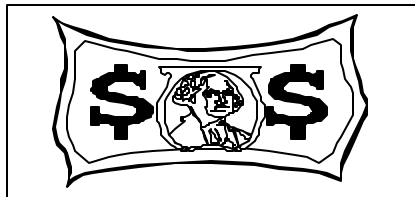
Expansion of the Security Deposit Guarantee Program (SB 97): A bill to expand eligibility for the SDGP to include families with Section 8 vouchers or RAP certificates — and which has no fiscal impact associated with it — died in the Appropriations Committee when it got caught in a dispute over an unrelated amendment. We are cautiously optimistic that the bill can be revived before the session ends as an amendment to some other bill.

Other voucher success funding: SB 97 also included money for housing search assistance and enforcement of the source-of-income discrimination laws. Active negotiations with DSS are in progress which may result in the use of unspent money from this year's RAP budget to fund some version of these proposals.

Beyond Shelter SB 97 included funds to expand Beyond Shelter. Although the bill did not pass, the Appropriations Committee put \$500,000 in new funding for Beyond Shelter into its budget. And, it added \$50,000 for the development of a strategic plan to end homelessness. It appears, however, that all of this money was removed from the version of the budget which passed the Senate on April 24.

Expansion of T-RAP (SB 443): T-RAP provides a one-year RAP certificate for certain families forced to leave TFA. The bill would expand the category of eligible families to include those which lose their welfare because of time limits. The Governor's proposed budget cut annual funding for T-RAP from \$3.4 million to \$1.0 million per year (which matches the existing level of usage), leaving no funds to expanded eligibility. The Appropriations Committee then added \$1.0 million to implement S.B. 443. This amount was subsequently reduced; and on April 24 the

Senate passed a budget which included \$1.487 million for T-RAP, thus allocating almost half a million dollars for eligibility expansion. As this article is written, however, the chances of retaining the \$487,000 add-back are not considered good because of the Governor's threat to veto the budget.♦



Unemployment Compensation (UC)

- Adopt alternate base period calculation. (SB 121 awaiting action in Senate).

- Make UC available to otherwise qualified applicants who are only available for part-time work. (HB 5578 is out of Labor, Appropriations and Finance, and Revenue and Bonding. Awaiting action in the House).

Benefits for Legal Immigrants

Legislators seem to expect that these state-funded programs will remain open to new applicants after June 30, 2002 and funding for continuing medical benefits is in the current budget proposal.

Earned Income Tax Credit

Create a refundable tax credit on the state personal income tax (SB 498 did not get out of Appropriations).♦

Food Stamp Bill Passes!

HB 5556, An Act Concerning Food Stamp Eligibility passed both House and Senate and was signed by the governor. Effective July 1, 2002, this law will allow food stamp recipients to have a car worth up to \$9,500--a large increase over the \$4,650 current limit.

And, effective October 1, 2002, the law will allow those who are leaving cash assistance to keep their present food stamp allotment for three additional months, without penalty.

For more information, contact End Hunger CT! at 860-296-1127.♦



Research On Housing Assistance & Jobs

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities has released "Housing Strategies to Strengthen Welfare Policy and Support Working Families." A growing body of research suggests that providing housing assistance to low-income families and enabling families to live closer to job opportunities may help welfare recipients get and keep jobs. This report offers a policy agenda to reduce the affordable housing gap and support strategies that appear to increase the likelihood of a successful

transition from welfare to work. Visit on the web: www.cbpp.org/4-15-02hous.pdf. ♦



Budget Bill Analysis Available on Line

Connecticut Voices for Children has posted an analysis of the budget bill on its website. SB 660 (the budget bill number) was passed by the General Assembly last week which the Governor has promised to veto. The analysis gives background on the revenue and spending choices. Visit: www.ctkidslink.org. ♦

Farm Bill Update at US Capitol

Last weekend, the House-Senate Conferees completed a compromise on the Farm Bill (HR 2646). Now known as the Conference Report, it goes back to each Chamber for final vote on May 2.

- ✓Reinstates benefits for legal immigrants.
- ✓Provides five months of transitional benefits for households leaving TANF.
- ✓Increases funding for emergency food programs and the Senior and WIC Farmer's Market Nutrition Programs
- ✓Provides additional commodities for the school lunch program.

Thank you to all who called in support of the bill. For more, call End Hunger CT! at 860-296-1127. ♦

Next CABHN Meeting

Friday, May 10th

10 - Noon

Community Renewal Team (CRT)

555 Windsor Ave., Hartford

Topics:

A staff member from **Senator Dodd's** office will attend to hear our recommendations for TANF Reauthorization, Legislative & Budget update, & more

The Connecticut Alliance for Basic Human Needs (CABHN) is a statewide network of individuals, community groups and organizations which supports and promotes advocacy on low-income issues. For more information, please call (860) 278-5688.

CABHN (Connecticut Alliance for Basic Human Needs)

80 Jefferson Street
Hartford, CT 06106