

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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OFFICE OF
THE GOVERNOR

AN ORDER

NO. 6 FY 89/90

DATE January 16, 1990

ESTABLISHING THE GOVERNOR'S BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION
ON ENERGY POLICY FOR MAINE'S LOW INCOME CITIZENS

WHEREAS, energy prices have increased significantly in the past year for households heating with oil, electricity, natural gas, or propane, and this increase currently constitutes a major problem for low-income citizens, including elderly households, mothers with young children, individuals with disabilities and tenants in subsidized housing in this state; and

WHEREAS, Maine's low-income citizens in recent years have faced a substantial decline in the average benefits available from state and federal resources for fuel assistance, particularly from the Home Energy Assistance Program; and

WHEREAS, applications for fuel assistance are substantially greater in number during the current heating season than at the same point last year when 52,374 households, representing 114,540 individuals, ultimately received benefits; and

WHEREAS, the Maine Energy Policy Act and current policies of the Maine Public Utilities Commission place the highest priority on deliveries of energy conservation services to electric customers in Maine by electric utilities; and

WHEREAS, adequate insulation of rental and single-family housing is the single biggest factor governing the size of on-going heating expense for low-income Maine people, and is particularly relevant when banks evaluate applications for single-family mortgages or multi-unit project financing; and

WHEREAS, numerous efforts are underway in Maine's state government and the private sector to coordinate more effectively the delivery of conservation services to, and adequate resources for paying the fuel bills of, Maine's low-income citizens; and

WHEREAS during the past eighteen months two groups comprised of representatives of these varying interests, under the auspices of the Public Utilities Commission and Bangor Hydro-Electric Company, have been meeting to recommend means for making energy costs more affordable to low-income households in the state and have completed their fact finding; and

WHEREAS, the safety, health and comfort of Maine's most vulnerable citizens is a matter of great concern to state government, the private sector and residents generally;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, JOHN R. MCKERNAN, JR., Governor of the State of Maine, do hereby establish the Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission on Energy Policy for Maine's Low Income Citizens.

Purpose

The purpose of the Blue Ribbon Commission is to identify public and private resources capable of mitigating the impact of rising energy costs on low-income people of Maine. The Commission will consider means for the more effective delivery of conservation services, changes in the pricing of electricity for low-income households that qualify for government assistance, incentives for weatherization of low-income rental units by landlords and housing authorities and the targeting of the state's fuel assistance programs to those households for which energy costs represent the highest percent of income. Private sector initiatives such as voluntary energy ratings for new residential housing, consideration of operating costs of new housing by banks during the financing application process or tax incentives for insulating existing rental housing, should also be considered.

Membership

The membership shall consist of: two representatives of the Maine State Senate, two representatives of the Maine House of Representatives, a citizen experienced in banking, a representative of oil dealers, a representative of the Maine Oil Dealers Association, a community action agency representative, three representatives from Maine's electric utilities, the Chairman of the Public Utilities Commission, the Public Advocate, the Director of the State Planning Office, the Director of the Division of Community Services, a representative from a consumer advocacy group and a representative from Maine's low income community.

Chairmanship

The Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission on Energy Policy for Maine's Low Income Citizens will be chaired by the Public Advocate.

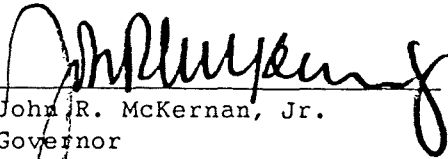
Staffing

Staff will be provided by the Office of the Public Advocate with assistance as required from the State Planning Office and the Public Utilities Commission.

Functions and Duties

The Commission shall prepare a comprehensive report and any recommendations to the Legislature in November 1990. The Commission shall meet at least nine times between March and November 1990 to receive presentations from local agencies, community groups, experts on specific issues and the public.

The effective date of this Order is January 16, 1990.


John R. McKernan, Jr.
Governor