

PRESS RELEASE



State Representative Rachel Storch District 64



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Representative Storch Supports Utility Assistance for Low- Income Missourians

Budget Committee Votes to Add \$6.1 million to State Utilicare Program

JEFFERSON CITY – Representative Rachel Storch (D-St. Louis) voted today to add \$6.1 million to Missouri’s Utilicare program, which provides utility assistance to the elderly, disabled and low-income.

“Despite our relatively mild winter, Missourians are experiencing extreme hardship from recent spikes in their utility bills,” Storch said. “In fact, Missourians anticipate record-setting high winter heating costs this year,” Storch noted. “This \$6.1 million in additional funding for Utilicare will provide assistance to 32,000 low-income Missourians. This does not go nearly far enough to provide Missourians with adequate relief, but it is a step in the right direction,” Storch said.

The Utilicare program is a financial assistance plan to assist elderly households, disabled households, and qualified individual households to be used for the payments of heating or cooling bills. Eligible households are those in which the head of the household or spouse is elderly or disabled and the income for the prior calendar year does not exceed one hundred and twenty-five percent of the current federal poverty level. Eligible households must also have assets of \$3,000 or less (excluding a home or vehicle); be responsible for the primary heating source; and must be United States citizens or legal aliens.

Utilicare is a state-funded extension of the federal government’s Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Missouri received approximately \$45 million this year through LIHEAP. State administrators anticipate that the entire \$45 million fund will be expended this year due to increased utility costs.

“Missourians must continue to ask why our utility bills are spiking when oil companies are reaping record profits,” said Storch. “We are forcing the elderly, disabled, and low-income to choose between paying for food and medicine and heating their homes,” Storch noted. “This is unacceptable, and I will continue to seek additional opportunities for relief from these outrageous increases in utility costs.”

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