

# Ohio House of Representatives



Kenny Yuko  
*State Representative*

7<sup>th</sup> House District  
Parts of Cuyahoga County

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## Committees

Commerce and Labor -  
Ranking Member

Criminal Justice

Health

Local/Municipal Government and  
Urban Revitalization

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## Special Committees

Bureau of Workers' Compensation  
Oversight Commission

Cancer Caucus

Unemployment Compensation Advisory  
Council

Friends,

This is the time of year for warm hearts and cold noses, the time when daylight grows short and winter nights become increasingly long and more frigid. I want to make sure that you and yours stay warm over the next few months, so enclosed please find information about Ohio's energy assistance programs. Although some Cleveland residents may not qualify for these programs, please extend goodwill to your neighbors by spreading the word about available relief.

In that spirit of goodwill, I would like to address charitable donations. If you are considering opening your heart and wallet to charities this season, thank you. That being said, there are a few things that the Federal Trade Commission suggests we keep in mind:

- If you are asked to donate to a particular charity, be sure to ask for the official name of the charity if it is not provided.
- Be sure to ask what percentage of your donation goes to the cause, and what percentage pays for administrative costs.
- If you are unfamiliar with a particular organization, review the charity's track record and call the charity's home office to inquire about its mission.
- Always ask for a receipt—all major charities are equipped to provide documentation of your donation.
- Finally, never give cash! It is always best to pay by check or credit card for security and tax record purposes.

There are also online resources that you can utilize to research almost any charity before you donate.

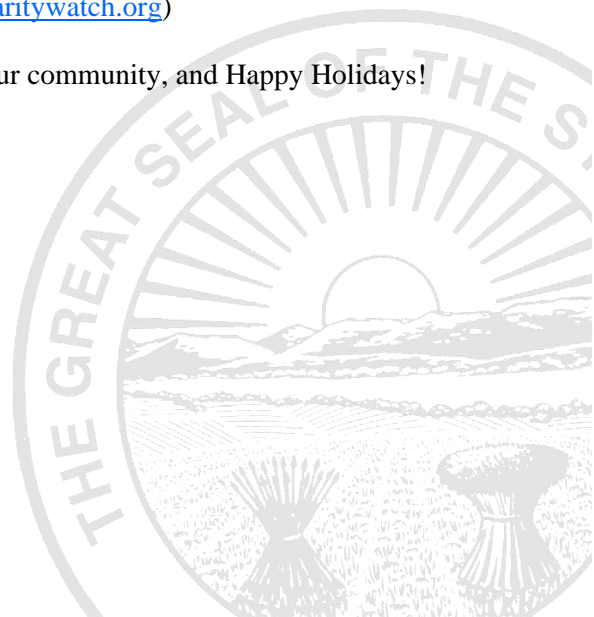
- Charity Navigator ([www.charitynavigator.com](http://www.charitynavigator.com))
- Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Alliance ([www.give.org](http://www.give.org))
- American Institute of Philanthropy ([www.charitywatch.org](http://www.charitywatch.org))

Thank you for your support and your service to our community, and Happy Holidays!

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kenny Yuko".

Kenny Yuko  
State Representative  
7<sup>th</sup> Ohio House District



## Relief from high winter heating bills available

*Public Utilities Commission urges Ohioans to keep "PACE" with energy costs*

As the cold-weather heating season approaches, it is important that we all take a moment to prepare our homes for winter. To help residents avoid high home heating costs, the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) has created a program called "Keeping PACE with Winter Heating Bills."

By following a few simple steps, Ohioans can take an active role in keeping their energy bills low this winter. Here are a few of the program's suggestions, which are also available on the PUCO Web site at [www.puco.ohio.gov](http://www.puco.ohio.gov).



This homeowner is weatherizing her windows by installing plastic sheeting. For more money-saving energy tips, visit the Dept. of Energy's Web site at [www.energysavers.gov](http://www.energysavers.gov)

Photo courtesy of the Ohio Department of Development

### **P**reparation

Preparing now for the winter can start you off on the right track. By doing things like caulking windows and other cracks on the outside of your home, you can help keep the cold winter air out.

Scheduling an appointment to have your furnace tuned-up now will be easier—and possibly less expensive—than if you have to make an emergency call for repair on a cold winter night. It is also a good time to check your home's insulation and duct work.

Remember to also talk to your electric or natural gas company now about budget billing and other payment plans that might make paying bills this winter a little easier.

### **A**ssistance

Sometimes, no matter how much we prepare, it can be difficult to pay winter heating bills.

There are several state and federal programs available to assist those who qualify. Begin researching these plans now, and find out what type of documentation and other paperwork you may need to apply for assistance.

There are many ways customers can receive assistance with home heating costs. The PUCO suggests that customers explore all options, including the Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP), the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), and the PUCO winter reconnect order.

### **C**hoice Providers

Ohio's natural gas companies offer programs that allow customers to choose who supplies their natural gas.

The PUCO's Apples to Apples charts (discussed on the reverse of this page) provide consumers with a "snapshot" comparison of current supplier price options, contract terms, and an estimated annual total cost.

To have a chart mailed to you, call (800) 299-7271. Whether you stay with your local utility or switch to another supplier, your natural gas company will continue to deliver the gas to your home, read your meter, and respond to service and safety concerns.

### **E**nergy Usage

Another way to reduce your energy costs is to simply use less energy. Installing a programmable thermostat and setting it to 68 degrees, and even cooler when you are not home, will help keep your energy costs down.

Setting your hot water heater back a few degrees and using long-life halogen or fluorescent light bulbs can also reduce your energy usage.

**For more helpful tips and money-saving suggestions, visit the U.S. Department of Energy's Web site at [www.energysavers.gov](http://www.energysavers.gov)**



## State offers energy assistance for those in need

*(Continued from previous page)*

The Ohio Department of Development, in conjunction with the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio, oversees several cold-weather energy assistance programs for income-eligible Ohioans. From direct cash-based bill payment assistance to payment deferral agreements, there are multiple options for those struggling to make ends meet.

### Winter Reconnect Order

Originally instituted by PUCO, the Winter Reconnect Order is an assistance program available to regulated electric and natural gas customers. The program allows customers who have had their service disconnected – or who have received a notice of disconnection – to pay a certain amount in order for their service to be restored or maintained.

Customers will have the option to pay \$175 or the amount owed (whichever is less), along with a reconnection fee of no more than \$20 for service to be restored or maintained. The service can only be used once through April 15, 2008, and there is no income eligibility for the program.

### Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP)

PIPP helps eligible customers make affordable energy payments through various programs. Under the Standard PIPP program, customers can pay 10 percent of their gross monthly household income to the utility company providing their heat and 5 percent to the utility company providing their secondary heating source. If the customer's company provides both gas and electric, or if the customer has an all-electric home, the payment is 15 percent of the gross monthly income.

To be eligible, you must be at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty level. A household of four with a yearly income of \$30,975 would qualify for the program. Your utility company must also be regulated by PUCO. For more information, or to apply for the PIPP program, contact your current gas or electric company.

### Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)

HEAP is a federally-funded program administered by the Ohio Department of Development that will make a one-time payment for most PUCO-regulated customers. The program is available to low-income

Ohioans at or below 175 percent of the federal poverty level who are challenged by the high costs of winter heating. A household of four with a yearly income of \$36,137 would be eligible for HEAP assistance.

To apply for the HEAP program or to find out more information, you can call (800) 282-0880. Applications for the program can also be downloaded and printed from the Ohio Department of Development's Web site at [www.odod.state.oh.us](http://www.odod.state.oh.us). From there, click on "Site Map" at the top of the page, and then select "Utility Payment Assistance" under the "Services for Citizens" header.

### Apples to Apples

This program sets up charts for customers to easily compare current natural gas and electric supplier price options and contract terms. This program is helpful because it lists only certified suppliers that are enrolling new customers, and it regularly updates the charts so customers have the most up-to-date information accessible. For more information, or to see how your energy provider stands up to the rest, visit [www.puco.ohio.gov](http://www.puco.ohio.gov) and click on the "Apples to Apples Comparison Charts" on the left-hand side of the Web page.

### Questions? Problems? Call me!

Unfortunately, the high cost of heating homes and businesses this winter will likely make a significant impact on Ohioans' budgets. That is why Gov. Ted Strickland, the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio and other state agencies have teamed up to create Ohio's Winter Heating Resource Center, a Web site that offers a "one-stop shop" for timely home heating information.

At [www.winterheat.ohio.gov](http://www.winterheat.ohio.gov), you will find information about assistance programs, energy conservation, natural gas choice, your rights as a utility customer and who to talk to if you if you have questions. As always, give me a call if I can be of any assistance to you.

