



A Legislative Report from **Rep. Kenny Yuko**

7th District of Ohio • Cities of Euclid and South Euclid, Richmond Heights, and Parts of Cleveland



Kenny Yuko
State Representative

Dear Friends,

January is a time for reflection and renewal, a time when people make optimistic resolutions for the upcoming year. I'd like to take the opportunity to discuss three of my resolutions for 2008.

One major concern continues to be the housing crisis facing Cleveland. I resolve to try and put a stop to foreclosures, and I have already introduced legislation to address the issue. House Bill 361 heeds the Foreclosure Prevention Task Force's recommendations and targets lease-option scams by restricting initiation fees and requiring clear disclosures. Finding solutions to the housing crisis must be a top priority.

I also resolve to address payday lending in a responsible way. Some residents have advocated for legislation that would shut down payday lending institutions entirely; others have expressed a sincere desire for these establishments to remain open, regardless of the exorbitant interest rates they charge. I want to find a happy medium. Responsible folks who wish to use payday lending should be able to do so. At the same time, parameters should be set for these lending institutions in order to fully protect consumers.

Finally, we should all resolve to work together on education. It is disconcerting to see the emotional battle that has erupted over the education of our young people. Today's children will populate tomorrow's workforce, and a short-term investment in their education will be a long-term investment in our future. In 2008, let's resolve to help get Ohio's educational system back on its feet for the good of our entire state.

This will be a dynamic year for Ohio, and I look forward to seeing my resolutions through. Thank you for your support and commitment to our community!

Respectfully,

Kenny Yuko
State Representative

CONTACT

Columbus Office
7th District
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Contacting Your State Legislator

"As your representative in the Statehouse, part of my job is to stand up for your interests. Whether this is done with a vote on an important piece of legislation or with a phone call to an agency or department on your behalf, I am your voice in the state capital.

For lawmakers, it is very important to know the opinions of constituents regarding pressing matters that come before the legislature. It does not matter how many town hall meetings are attended or how many local newspapers are read, it would be impossible to have all the information necessary to make good decisions without regular citizen input!"

—State Rep. Kenny Yuko

To contact your legislator's office, there are several options for you to choose from.

Via Telephone (Columbus Office)

This is the office at the Statehouse. All legislative staff in the General Assembly are equipped to deal with almost any issue, or can find the best person to help you if you have a problem needing attention. Office hours are 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday thru Friday, and the office is closed on Saturday and Sunday. The best way to contact this office is via phone:

Direct Phone: (614) 466-8012

Toll-Free Messaging System: (800) 282-0253

Direct Fax: (614) 719-0007

Via Electronic Mail (E-Mail)

To contact the office via e-mail, please use the following address: district07@ohr.state.oh.us.

Office staff checks this e-mail account daily to make sure they are staying in touch with the constituents of the 7th district. On occasion, you may receive a response from a legislative staff member if a simple answer or solution is included in your initial opinion letter or request for assistance.

Via Postal Mail

Don't have a computer? No problem! The old-fashioned methods of communication will still work, and postal mail is checked several times each week. This method is also the best way to get forms or other similar paperwork to the office for review.

*Note: If sending important documents, please only send a copy! The U.S. Postal Service cannot 100 percent guarantee delivery to the office, so it is important that you not send your only copy!

To contact the office via postal mail, please use the following address:

Columbus Office

Hon. Kenny Yuko
State Representative, 7th District
Ohio House of Representatives
77 South High Street, 11th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Special Events and Speaker Requests



State Representative Kenny Yuko, top right, celebrates the grand opening of the Euclid Culinary School.

All offices receive invitations to events in both Columbus and the district nearly every day of the week. Do you think your meeting attendees would like to discuss issues and legislative matters with one of their state elected officials? Send us an invitation!

Though all requests cannot be granted due to scheduling conflicts, lawmakers are able to attend many different events in their districts throughout the year.

When sending the invitation to your event or special gathering, please send all key information via any of the methods described on this page at least (2) weeks in advance. That way, there will be adequate time for the office to prepare for your event, and there will be a greater likelihood that there will not be another event conflicting with the time that your group meets.

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.



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

Photo courtesy of the Ohio Department of Development

P reparation	A ssistance	C hoice Providers	E nergy Usage
<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Sometimes, no matter how much we prepare, it can be difficult to pay winter heating bills.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Ohio's natural gas companies offer programs that allow customers to choose who supplies their natural gas.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Setting your hot water heater back a few degrees and using long-life halogen or fluorescent light bulbs can also reduce your energy usage.</p> <div data-bbox="1185 1522 1575 1942"><p>For more helpful tips and money-saving suggestions, visit the U.S. Department of Energy's Web site at www.energysavers.gov</p></div>

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. 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 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, 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 have questions. As always, give me a call if I can be of any assistance to you.



‘Power’-ful policy for Ohio’s future

Legislature receives Governor’s plan to revitalize and sustain state’s energy future

Eight years ago, the Ohio General Assembly joined nearly 20 other states in deregulating their electric utilities, believing that the new system would increase competition between power companies, thereby affording consumers more choices and lower prices.

This has not happened.

Now, facing an uncertain future of unregulated power monopolies and the prospect of substantial rate hikes when stabilization plans expire in December 2008, Governor Strickland has committed to working with the legislature to address the issue. He recently unveiled an energy restructuring plan that promises to modernize our power grid and phase in alternatives to coal, which accounts for about 90 percent of Ohio’s electricity. Perhaps more importantly, it promises to create thousands of good jobs and reinforce our state’s infrastructure in order to catch up to other states in the realm of advanced energy production.

The governor based his plan upon three central objectives: (1) ensuring affordable and stable energy prices; (2) protecting existing jobs and creating new jobs through an advanced energy portfolio standard; and (3) empowering consumers to make smart energy decisions while modernizing the energy infrastructure.

Electric bills may rise dramatically once rate freezes expire, and the governor’s plan attempts to keep that increase to a minimum. When deregulation took hold in Illinois, residents saw their electric bills rise by 55 percent. In Maryland, rates spiked 72 percent.

While attempting to hold down the price, the governor’s plan aims to increase the reliability of our system. Ohio ranks fifth in the nation in energy usage. As our need for energy rises, we need to make sure our supply is plentiful and dependable.

While coal may still have a place in the future of our power grid, we also must take steps to diversify our portfolio, with the added goal of cleaning our air. The governor’s plan leans heavily on new technologies as a clean, significant source of our future power. His bill empowers the Public Utilities

The proposal allows Ohioans to shop for electric providers and gives utilities two options to market their product:

1. If utilities can prove a competitive market exists, they would be allowed to charge market rates.
2. If utilities cannot prove a competitive market exists, rates would be set under an electricity security plan that opens rate decisions to negotiation based on generation and delivery costs, as well as infrastructure improvements and environmental compliance.

Commission of Ohio to adopt standards for advanced energy – including clean coal, advanced nuclear and fuel cells – so that at least a quarter of our electricity comes from these sources by the year 2025. At least half would come from renewables – wind, solar, geothermal or biofuels.

Twenty-three states already have this kind of renewable energy standard. Ohio must have the courage to join them in order to protect our power grid and protect our environment simultaneously. State Rep. Michael Skindell (D-Cleveland) has already introduced a bill that requires 20 percent of our energy to come from renewables by 2018, half of that from wind power.

Wind power could bring more than clean and dependable power. A study by Environment Ohio found it would provide 3,100 permanent jobs, an \$8.2 billion increase in gross state product and \$3.7 billion in increased wages to Ohio workers. As an added bonus, 170 million metric tons of carbon dioxide would not be emitted into our atmosphere.

I am committed to work with Governor Strickland to seek the reliability, predictability and affordability that deregulation promised, but failed, to deliver in Ohio. The governor’s plan has already been endorsed by the Ohio Farm Bureau, the Ohio Manufacturers’ Association and the Ohio AFL-CIO.

Energy hearings are underway, and it is our hope to pass a responsible plan soon so there is ample time to prepare before stabilization plans expire.

Help Me Grow program offers healthy options

Programs offered to give children and families the best start possible

For some Ohio families, finding programs to give their children a healthy start can be a challenge. Luckily, the Ohio Department of Health offers a program that gives infants and toddlers a chance at success in the early stages of their lives.

Help Me Grow is administered in all 88 counties of the state. With the use of state and federal funds, *Help Me Grow* gives all children up to 3 years old access to vital services for them and their families. The program also encourages prenatal and well-baby care and provides programs for children with disabilities.

Services offered through *Help Me Grow* provide children with a better chance at starting school with the two most important tools: a healthy body and a sharp mind. Local *Help Me Grow* programs provide home visits that:

- Identify children with, or who are at risk for, developmental delays or disabilities
- Offer parents up-to-date information during a newborn visit from a registered nurse on child health, development, safety and community resources; during the visit, a registered nurse conducts a physical assessment of the newborn and mother
- Give screenings for health, hearing, vision and development
- Present parents with information about their child's social and emotional development that lays the foundation for later school success
- Assure that parents have information on the importance of early childhood immunizations and routine pediatric health care

Other services provided by the *Help Me Grow* program target people planning on becoming parents. They include in-home visits from nurses to educate parents on how to care for their children, and education on how to have a healthy pregnancy. The umbrella of the program also includes the "Ohio School Readiness Initiative," which prepares children for the start of school.

In 2004, the state saw more than 16,000 babies born to mothers who did not receive prenatal care until after their first trimester. In 2005, more than

one in five 2-year-old children had not completed immunizations for measles, mumps and other life-threatening diseases. With assistance from the *Help Me Grow* program, however, more than 33,000 infants and toddlers received home visits that included developmental and health services.

Studies show children most eligible for the *Help Me Grow* program come from families up to 185 percent of the federal poverty level, from parents who have less than a ninth-grade education or from parents who are unemployed. There are no income requirements for the program. The services continuously protect children from disease and infection and work toward promoting healthy living practices for them, despite what their living situation may be.

The Ohio Department of Health's *Help Me Grow* Web site contains a wealth of information for expecting parents and for those raising children under 3. To find out if the *Help Me Program* is a good fit for you and your family, visit www.ohiohelpmegrow.org. To find the *Help Me Grow* program available in your county, please call the Bureau of Early Intervention Services toll-free at (800) 755-GROW (4769) or at (614) 644-8389.

Services At A Glance

Prenatal Visits: Education for expectant parents; materials about maternal and child health, development and safety; referrals to community resources

Newborn Home Visits: Physical assessment of baby and mother; newborn and postpartum care

Service Coordination: Enrollment in multiple services; transition to other programs

Family Support Services: Parent mentoring; parent group activities; support for transition from hospital to home

Specialized Services: Nutrition; physical therapy; social work services; psychological services; vision services; speech-language therapy