

# Community Spotlight



Representative Kenny Yuko recognized that rising heating costs are affecting constituents in his district, and he took action.

Last month, Rep. Yuko organized a community forum to assist those who have concerns about skyrocketing energy costs. He would like to thank the following participants: the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio, Ohio Consumers' Counsel, Ohio Department of Development, Telephone Lifeline Program and the Western Reserve Area Agency on Aging.

Rep. Yuko also sends his thanks to those in attendance.

State Representative  
**Kenny Yuko**  
Ohio House District 07  
77 South High Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215-6111



# A Legislative Report from Rep. Kenny Yuko

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



**Kenny Yuko**  
State Representative



## Dear Constituents,

Winter weather is upon us, and the high price of natural gas is looming large. Home heating costs are likely to be significantly higher than last year, which is causing concern for those on limited incomes - including the elderly.

Officials warn that homeowners can expect to see, on average, a 50-percent increase in their bills this winter. Simply put, soaring energy costs are putting consumers in a bind and forcing them to make tough budgeting choices.

Inside the newsletter you will find helpful tips to make your home more energy efficient. We could all use some assistance in keeping heating costs down during the winter months and— now more than ever —conservation and efficiency are vital.

As legislators, we need to find practical solutions that offer short-term relief, and we must look to the future for renewable energy sources that will keep costs down over time. I have included an update on developments at the Statehouse and what lawmakers are doing to help.

However you choose to celebrate this winter season, I wish you and yours the very best. Season's Greetings and have a happy, healthy New Year!

Sincerely,

**Kenny Yuko**  
State Representative

## CONTACT

77 South High Street  
District 07  
Columbus, Ohio 43215-6111  
(614) 466-8012  
(800) 282-0253  
[district07@ohr.state.oh.us](mailto:district07@ohr.state.oh.us)

## DECEMBER 2005

Dear Constituents	1
Legislative Perspective	2
Energy Solutions	3
Community Spotlight	4

Please feel free to share your e-mail address with my office so we can keep you updated on what's new at the Statehouse.

## Ohio heat assistance programs

Despite best efforts to curb heating costs, some Ohioans find it difficult to pay ever-increasing utility bills.

There is help for those who need it.

You may be able to cut your heating costs by participating in Ohio's Gas Choice Program. Contact the Consumers' Council toll-free at 1-877-742-5622 or [www.pickocc.org](http://www.pickocc.org) for more information.

Last year, more than 257,000 lower-income Ohio households relied on help from Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), to assist them in paying heating bills through the winter. Contact the state HEAP office toll-free number: (800) 282-0880, or download an application at [www.odod.state.oh.us](http://www.odod.state.oh.us).

A Percentage of Income Plan allows you, if qualified, to make gas and electric payments based on a percentage of household income.

The former Ohio Energy Credit Program (OEC) now provides a one-time cash payment or credit to qualified elderly or disabled individuals.

The Home Weatherization Assistance Program (HWAP) helps low-income homeowners and renters reduce energy consumption while increasing the comfort of their homes. For details, visit [www.eere.energy.gov/weatherization](http://www.eere.energy.gov/weatherization). For assistance in the state of Ohio, call (614) 466-6797.

## Drilling for oil in state parks, beneath Lake Erie is no 'quick fix'

A bill has been introduced in the Ohio Senate that would allow drilling for oil and natural gas in Ohio's most protected lands. The measure is also being discussed in the House of Representatives and is catching the attention of media outlets throughout the state.

This legislation would open up drilling in state parks and beneath the surface of Lake Erie, our most valuable natural resource. Currently, drilling on Ohio wildlife preserves and beneath the lake is not permitted.

Ohio's hikers, bikers, and boaters share valid concerns with environmental groups. To permit drilling in protected lands and beneath protected waters puts natural resources at risk. Building access roads across parks also hinders recreational activities.

Supporters of the proposal believe immediate drilling could curb gas and oil prices in Ohio. In reality, consumers should not expect to see



A proposed bill would permit drilling beneath the surface of scenic Lake Erie, pictured above. -Courtesy of the Ottawa County Visitor Bureau

a drop in costs for some time. Drilling is a long and complicated process, and Ohioans' gas bills will most certainly not be affected this winter. In addition, the amount of oil and natural gas extracted will not shift the national shortage, according to the Ohio Environmental Council.

We must carefully consider the implications of drilling for oil and natural gas in protected areas. The outcome is a gamble that could jeopardize the quality of Ohio's lakes and parks.

## Tip of the Month How to get the most out of a tank of gas

Whether you drive an economy car or an SUV, there are plenty of ways to improve your gas mileage. Avoid aggressive driving and observe the speed limit. Speeding, fast acceleration, and hard braking wastes gas. Lighten your load by clearing your car of extra weight, and remove roof racks or carriers if not used frequently. Keep current with car maintenance—clean air filters can improve gas mileage by as much as 10%. Properly inflated and aligned tires will improve gas mileage by 3%. Using the wrong grade of oil can reduce mileage by 1% to 2%. For longer-term savings, consider a high-mileage vehicle for your next purchase.

-Courtesy of the U.S. Department of Energy



## Legislature aims to lessen the home heating cost burden



Ohio consumers must deal with much higher natural gas and heating oil prices this winter. Here at the Statehouse, we are looking at short and long term solutions to this growing problem. The House Public Utilities and Energy Committee is holding hearings intended to develop ways to meet this challenge.

State government has already boosted the amount of money devoted to the Home Energy Assistance Program, or HEAP. Additional Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds have been designated to assist with funding for

HEAP. Additionally, there are other fiscally responsible ways to bulk up this program.

The state will collect more taxes in the upcoming months, due to higher gas prices. House Democrats proposed using those dollars to assist senior citizens in need of the HEAP Program this winter. The proposal was tabled, largely along party lines.

Last year, more than 257,000 lower-income Ohio households relied on help from HEAP to assist them in paying heating bills through the winter. Another 133,000 obtained emergency help, either to reconnect their service or avoid disconnection. For more information on this program, call the state HEAP office number: (800) 282-0880, or download an application at <http://www.odod.state.oh.us>.

Longer term, Democrats have put forward a proposal to increase the amount of electricity in Ohio generated from renewable sources such as solar, wind and biomass. Less than 1 percent of Ohio's electricity currently is produced from renewable resources. Legislation now under review by the Public Utilities Committee could create a renewable energy standard for Ohio. The goal: increase the percentage of electricity generated from renewable sources to 20 percent by 2021.

## Quick tips: Make minor adjustments in your home and save money



During the winter months, Ohioans are thinking about the looming cost of keeping warm. Here are some steps you can take to maintain comfort while keeping costs down.

Weatherization and conservation don't need to break your bank.

New habits can help reduce energy consumption and keep heating bills down. Consider making these minor adjustments in your home:

Simple and inexpensive home improvements can shave hundreds of dollars off your winter heating bills:

- Listen for doors or windows that "whistle" on windy days and seal them – especially in the rooms where you spend the most time.
- Have your furnace inspected and serviced once during the season. Check the filter every month and change it if dirty.
- Consider installing a programmable thermostat that can automatically reduce the temperature at night and when you are away from home.
- Insulate your water heater tank, the first six feet of the hot water supply line, and hot water pipes or heating ducts in unheated areas such as crawlspaces and attics.
- Save water, fuel, and money by replacing leaking hot water faucets and adding low-flow devices.
- Insulate attics, outside walls, and crawlspaces.

- Clean ranges and ovens regularly. Pay particular attention to reflector pans under the burners.
- Clean your dryer's lint filter with every load to allow air to circulate freely and dry clothes faster.
- Set your thermostat as low as is comfortable for your family (about 68 degrees Fahrenheit). It's cheaper to add clothes than degrees.
- Clean heating ducts and registers and keep them free of obstructions.
- Close off rooms that are unused for long periods of time (e.g., spare bedrooms). Keep vents closed and registers off until needed.
- Open blinds and drapes on sunny days to allow nature to heat your house. Close them at night to help keep heat in.
- Lower the temperate setting on gas water heaters to the "warm" setting (120 degrees Fahrenheit).