

# WAP Corner: NASCSP Submits Testimony to the Energy and Water Subcommittee

*by Robert Adams*

*“As Chair of the Legislative Committee for the Board of Directors for the National Association for State Community Services Programs (NASCSP), I am pleased to submit testimony in support of the Department of Energy’s (DOE) Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) and in support of DOE State Energy Programs (SEP). We are seeking an FY 2006 appropriations level of \$250 million for the WAP and \$50 million for SEP. NASCSP believes these funding levels are essential in continuing and improving the outstanding results of these state grant programs for our citizens.”*

This was the opening statement made by Vaughn Clark, Director of Oklahoma’s Office of Community Development, in his testimony submitted to the House Appropriations Subcommittee for Energy and Water Development, and Related Agencies on March 18, 2005 supporting the 2006 funding request for the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP). This was our first opportunity to provide evidence to this Subcommittee and we are hopeful that the statements made by Mr. Clark on behalf of NASCSP and the Program will help defend our position regarding the WAP. Here are just a few of the highlights contained in this year’s testimony:

“The WAP is the largest residential energy conservation program in the nation and serves a vital function in helping low-income families reduce their energy use. Developed as a pilot project in 1975, the WAP was institutionalized in 1979 within DOE and is operated in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and on several Native American reservations....The energy use reduction resulting from these efforts helps our country reduce its dependency on foreign oil and decreases the cost of energy for families in need. With lower energy bills, these families can increase their usable income and buy other essentials like food, shelter, clothing, medicine, and health care.”

“According to the Energy Information Administration's (EIA) Annual Energy Outlook, 2005 projected first-year energy savings for households weatherized during this year are estimated to be \$274, reflecting revised assumptions about future natural gas prices. For every dollar spent, the WAP returns \$2.96 in energy and non-energy benefits over the life of the weatherized home. ...”

“When energy costs rise, like they have during the 2004-05 heating season, even a nominal increase can have a dramatic negative impact on low-income families. The expected increase in this year’s energy costs may amount to an additional \$500 or more for most families. For middle-income families, this increase will amount to less than one quarter of one percent of the total household income. For many low-income families; however, this increase will result in a 3 to 5 percent reduction in their expendable income and will cause families to go without other important essentials like food, medicine, or clothing to meet this higher financial demand.”

“One of the major outcomes of WAP field deployment is that the private sector eventually adopts these new technologies. This pattern has been established through several advancements including

blower door-directed air infiltration, duct system testing and sealing, furnace efficiency standards, and insulation and ventilation protocols. The acceptance of these standards and protocols by the private sector is enormously important as builders attempt to construct new properties or rehabilitate existing ones using a renewed energy efficiency philosophy.”

“Of equal importance to the technological and programmatic foundation are the WAP contributions in achieving overall national energy policies and social strategies. Some examples...include:

Reducing harmful green house gas through reduced CO2 emissions by avoiding energy production....

Increasing jobs in communities throughout the country.....

Investing money into communities through job creation, local purchasing of goods and services, and tax revenues....

Reducing consumption of imported fuels by reducing residential energy consumption....”

“Again in 2006, the President has maintained his commitment to WAP as a “priority” within his energy strategy and has asked Congress to appropriate sufficient resources to the Program. Our organization strongly supports the President’s commitment and respectfully requests this Committee to provide the funding at the \$250 million level to meet the President’s priority status for the WAP.”

“In addition to the state grant funds included in this year’s request, the states are also supporting an initiative by the Office of Management and Budget and the Department of Energy to conduct an overall evaluation of the WAP to re-establish its cost effectiveness as a federal investment....NASCSP respectfully requests that a line item in the Appropriations bill be created this year to set-aside these funds from the traditional state formula grant activity and that the Department of Energy be given the decision-making authority for how these funds will be set-aside to complete the project.”

NASCSP is also concerned about the low level of funding proposed for the State Energy Programs (SEP) in 2006. SEP enjoys a broad constituency, supporting state energy efficiency programs that include energy generation, fuels diversity, energy use in economic development, and promoting more efficient uses of traditional energy resources....we are supporting their request of \$50 million for FY 2006....”

In his summary statement, Mr. Clark captured the sentiments of all of us who work in the WAP and SEP offices:

*“By the evidence provided herein, this Committee can be assured that the increase in WAP and SEP funding will provide essential services to thousands of low-income families, resulting in greater energy savings, more economic investments, increased leveraging of other funds, and less reliance on high-cost, foreign oil – outcomes that will benefit the nation. NASCSP looks forward to working with Committee members in the future as we attempt to create energy self-sufficiency for millions of American families through these invaluable national programs.”*

NASCSP would like to thank Mr. Clark for providing this year's testimony to the House Energy and Water Subcommittee and we all hope that good things will result from the Members knowing about the excellent work performed by the WAP. Testimony to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee is due in late April and will closely resemble the remarks made by Mr. Clark last week. As always, we will keep you informed as we know more.