

[Melody Bodette, VPR News](#)

(Host) Vermont's congressional delegation says it will fight to protect funding for low-income heating assistance.

That's even though President Barack Obama has proposed slashing by 50 percent the "Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program" - or LIHEAP.

Senator Patrick Leahy says some in Washington don't understand the importance of the program, which benefits 20,000 Vermont households.

Leahy says he'd like to see the program paid for by cutting tax breaks for oil companies.

(Leahy) "Do we have to find ways to cut the deficit? Yes. But it does not make sense to cut out heat for low- and middle-income families, but to then to give tens of billion of dollars in tax breaks to major oil companies."

(Host) Congressman Peter Welch accuses House Republicans of taking what he calls a "meat cleaver" to the budget.

There have been proposals to cut community development block grants, and replace Medicare with vouchers, while extending tax cuts enacted under former President George W. Bush.

Welch says the deficit does need to be cut, but he says that approach is wrong.

(Welch) "The president has a goal to bring our budget into balance. I share, that goal, we can achieve it, but we can't achieve it if the approach we take is to take away \$143 from a seasonally unemployed father trying to keep the heat on. It's not only wrong, it won't work."

(Host) Sanders says the delegation has fought to fully fund LIHEAP for the past three years and they'll continue to do so.