

STATE OF NEW YORK

Public Service Commission

William M. Flynn, Chairman

Three Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12223

Further Details: (518) 474-7080

<http://www.dps.state.ny.us>

FOR RELEASE: IMMEDIATELY

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PSC Approves Central Hudson Proposal for Home Energy Assistance -HEAP Customers to Receive One-Time \$200 Benefit-

Albany, NY—1/18/06—The New York State Public Service Commission (Commission) today approved Central Hudson Gas & Electric Corporation's (Central Hudson) proposal to provide a \$200 bill credit to approximately 7,000 customers who are expected to receive assistance from New York's Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) this winter. The one-time benefit is intended to provide additional and immediate assistance to eligible low-income customers in managing their winter heating bills.

"We have been working closely with the utilities and the New York State Consumer Protection Board (CPB) to identify ways to provide assistance to those least able to absorb rising energy costs," said Commission Chairman William M. Flynn. "Today's decision is consistent with the overall goals and objectives of the Powerful Opportunities Program previously approved by the Commission, and I commend the company for working with staff and other interested parties, most notably the CPB, to maximize the effectiveness of these program funds this winter."

Theresa Santiago, Chairperson and Executive Director of the Consumer Protection Board said, "This is welcome news for the most vulnerable of Central Hudson's customers. It further demonstrates that New York State is exploring all reasonable means to assist consumers in responding to the nation's record high energy prices."

To fund the initiative, Central Hudson will draw from \$1.3 million in unspent funds that were collected for the Powerful Opportunities Program (POP) during the period from July 2001 through June 2005 and any program funds that are not spent during the period from June 2005 through April 2006.

The Powerful Opportunities Program (POP) was initially approved by the Commission in 2001 as part of a comprehensive gas and electric plan. POP assists low-income customers in Central Hudson's service territory, and it is designed to help participants avoid losing service due to non-payment. The POP program was extended for an additional two years under the current rate plan approved by the Commission in 2004. Because customer participation levels in the program have been below the targets established, the Commission approved the use of unspent funds to provide immediate relief this winter to HEAP-eligible customers.

The Commission will issue a written decision detailing today's vote. The decision in Commission Cases 00-E-1273 and 00-G-1274, when available, can be obtained from the Commission's Web site at <http://www.dps.state.ny.us> by accessing the Commission Documents section of the homepage. Many libraries offer free Internet access. Commission orders also can be obtained from the Files Office, 14th floor, 3 Empire State Plaza, Albany, New York 12223 (518-474-2500).