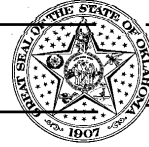


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Denise A. Bode



Commissioner

12-15-05

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A message from Commissioner Denise Bode:

A TRULY PRACTICAL “HOUSE-WARMING” GIFT

Remember those “practical” gifts you hated as a child? The bathrobe, the pen-and-pencil set, the slippers that had you saying “thank-you” through clenched teeth? But with age comes a true appreciation for the “practical” gifts that come our way. Now that bathrobe given to you last Christmas feels especially warm and comfortable on a winter morning, as do those slippers. Bottom line: At least some of the best gifts are “practical.”

In this season of giving, I invite all Oklahomans to join me, the Oklahoma Energy Resources Board (OERB) and Oklahoma energy companies and utilities in giving a “practical” gift that is quite literally a “house-warming” gift, one that benefits both the recipient and the giver. It’s a donation to any one of the funds that have been set up to help the less fortunate stay warm.

The decision by the OERB to donate \$1 million to the Oklahoma Weatherization Program to help those less fortunate keep warm is a meaningful step to help those less fortunate not just this year but for years to come. In addition it reduces the cost of energy for all of us as it reduces demand for energy in a very meaningful way. The Weatherization Program pays for the weatherization of the homes of low-income Oklahomans, thus lowering utility bills on a permanent basis, freeing up scarce cash badly needed by low-income households. In many parts of the state there is a 3-year waiting list for folks trying to get their homes protected by the good folks who implement the program in the local Community Action Program.

The weatherization program offers donors a very generous state tax credit, with donations to the Fund eligible for a 50 percent Oklahoma tax credit. As a tax attorney, I can say with confidence that for those of you scrambling with your year-end tax strategy, this is a godsend. I was the first contributor to the program when the Commission worked with the Department of Commerce under Russell Perry’s leadership to put the tax credit on the tax return. It had been on the law books for several years but the opportunity had never been shared with the public.

In addition to your donation to this program I would urge you to consider a donation either to the Salvation Army that administers 3 excellent energy assistance programs on behalf of the state’s three largest utilities: OG&E’s Lend-A-Hand, ONG’s Share the Warmth, and PSO’s “Light A Life.”

The need is great. Every year more than 200 thousand Oklahoma families qualify for financial assistance with their energy bills, and the demand is greater than the supply. Natural gas prices are at near-record highs across the country, and many of our fellow Oklahomans could quite literally be left in the cold unless you

help. The state's biggest utilities (Public Service Company, Oklahoma Natural Gas, and Oklahoma Gas and Electric) have all stepped up, announcing major donations to the Salvation Army programs. I encourage you and Oklahoma's business and faith community to do the same during December, a month that's been set aside by the Oklahoma Conference of Churches to focus on those in need.

You need not worry about only part of your gift going to help. All administrative costs for the Salvation Army utility programs are handled through utility donations, so your dollar given will be a dollar received. Of course, all contributions are tax deductible.

To make a donation or find out more regarding any of the energy assistance programs administered by the Salvation Army, you can go to the respective utility's web site, or call the Salvation Army at (405) 840-0735. To find out more about the Weatherization Program, contact the Oklahoma Department of Commerce at (800) 879-6552 ext 359. In the Oklahoma City metro area, call 815-5359.

