

NATIONAL OILHEAT RESEARCH ALLIANCE

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The National Oilheat Research Alliance (NORA) is a collaborative program established to strengthen the heating oil industry by improving education and training for employees, providing information to consumers, and developing highly energy efficient products for oilheat customers without a subsidy from the federal government. The heating oil industry is primarily composed of small businesses, and NORA has provided the opportunity for marketers and dealers to work cooperatively to build a stronger, more energy efficient industry. NORA has developed world class education programs, more efficient appliances, and a strong consumer education campaign highlighting the benefits of oilheat.

In 2005, Congress extended NORA for an additional five years, but only after the program had lapsed for eight months. That lapse was extremely disruptive, resulting in delayed projects and requiring a restructuring of operations. Now, law expired on February 6, 2010.

NORA is essential to the long term future of the heating oil industry, and reauthorization will ensure that oilheat customers continue to reap the benefits.

LEGISLATION NEEDED

Last year, Senators Reed (D-RI), Snowe (R-ME) and Shaheen (D-NH) introduced S. 1672, a bill to extend NORA for one year, to February 2011, allowing the oilheat industry time to work with Congress on a longer-term reauthorization measure that would embrace efforts to develop a renewable, ultra-low sulfur heating fuel for homes and businesses. S. 1672 was approved by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee by voice vote and was placed on the Senate's legislative calendar for action in 2010. In the House, Representatives Welch (D-VT), Pitts (R-PA), Michaud (D-ME) and McMahan (D-NY) introduced similar NORA legislation (H.R. 3589).

S. 1672 and H.R. 3589 would provide the best means for enabling the heating oil industry to continue to finance R&D, training, safety, and consumer information without the use of federal tax dollars. PMAA urges both the House and Senate to pass a one year extension of NORA immediately either as a standalone measure or through a Jobs or energy package. The heating oil industry is also eager to begin discussions on a long term authorization that would empower the industry to sell a cleaner and greener fuel, and develop more manufacturing jobs in the United States. While a short term extension is appropriate, developing a way to ensure that this fuel meets the needs of its customers and the country is also vital.

NORA ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- NORA has been working with the National Biodiesel Board to bring biofuels to the heating oil industry. Called BioHeat®, biofuels have excellent performance abilities and are cleaner than other sources. The American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) approved BioHeat blends of B5 (a five percent blend). NORA continues to work with ASTM on approval for 6 percent (B6) to 20 percent (B20) blends of biodiesel.
- NORA developed highly efficient home boilers and furnaces now available in the marketplace. Prior to NORA, the top efficiency for oilheat equipment was 86 percent.
- An interactive database that tracks all training records, and provides up-to-date training opportunities. It allows Heating Technicians to access detailed reports on their credential status, and educators can easily post CEUs for their students and conduct communication to potential students for upcoming classes through this database.
- NORA developed a Fuel Savings Analysis Calculator (FSA) for demonstrating to consumers the advantages of upgrading older heating and hot water systems to new, higher efficiency equipment.
- A wealth of educational materials for the heating oil industry including books on how to assist consumers in saving energy, improving equipment performance, preventing leaks and responding to petroleum releases.
- NORA partnered with community colleges and vocational schools (private and public) to establish training curricula for well trained professional employees.
- NORA has developed effective communication vehicles to inform customers that oilheat is a modern, high quality product delivered by local businesses. In the coming years, NORA will work to ensure all consumers have access to information about high efficient equipment.
- NORA continues to improve tank quality. The safe storage of oil is of critical importance, and NORA is developing new technologies, better inspection techniques, and more effective ways to remediate leaks.

“THE ASK”

PMAA urges Congress to pass a one year extension of NORA (S. 1672/H.R. 3589) immediately either as a standalone measure or through a Jobs or energy package. Also, PMAA urges Congress to pass a longer term extension of NORA that would empower the industry to sell a cleaner and greener fuel and would develop more manufacturing jobs in the United States.

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