

## (October 11, 2005) Congressman Lipinski Raises Alarm

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#### About Skyrocketing Home Heating Costs

CHICAGO, IL - Congressman Dan Lipinski expressed his concern today over the alarming rise in natural gas prices and the effect they will have on home heating bills in the Chicago area this winter. He joined U.S Representatives Jan Schakowsky, Bobby Rush, Members of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, and Danny Davis of Illinois at a Congressional Chicago hearing to hear expert testimony on the situation from state and city officials, as well as representatives from the Illinois Commerce Commission, Citizen Utility Board, Nicor Gas, Peoples Energy, and the American Gas Association.

Natural gas prices are increasing significantly and are having a huge impact on heating costs. Even before recent increases, Illinois residents were paying 44 percent more for natural gas than in 1999. And prices are expected to rise an additional 40 to 70 percent this year.

"The dramatic price increases will force some very hard decisions, especially for those on fixed incomes," Lipinski said. "Seniors will be forced to choose between paying for heat and medication, and some families will choose between heat and food. These are proud individuals, hard workers who will suddenly find themselves having to make difficult choices between basic necessities. I fear that the sky-high prices could even prove to have deadly consequences this winter."

"But we will not just feel this impact in our home heating bills," added Lipinski. "As a member of the Small Business Committee I have heard from a number of business owners in my district who are concerned about the impact of increasing natural gas prices. As some businesses pass on these costs, families will face rising prices on everything from milk to clothing. Those owners who cannot pass on the costs may have to lay off employees and possibly face the loss of their business."

"And don't think that this is a problem that only affects people living 'somewhere else.' Many of those turning to my office for assistance with their heating bills come from communities like La Grange Park, Riverside and Palos Hills."

"I will continue to work with my colleagues in Congress, as well as local communities and businesses, to find tangible solutions to this problem."