

Press Release

**Applications for Low Income Energy Assistance Reach Record Levels
States Call on Congress to Increase Funding for LIHEAP**

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The state directors of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) today released the results of their winter application survey. As shown in the attached table, LIHEAP applications have reached record levels and are projected to increase by about 1.5 million or 25 percent over last year's levels. The number served this year is expected to reach about 7.3 million households, 800,000 more than the record set in 1985.

Fifteen states had increases of at least 21% including two that are projected to increase by at least 200%: Texas 201%, Florida 200%, California 162%, Tennessee 60%, Arkansas 50%, Arizona 35%, Alaska 34%, New Mexico and Oregon 26%, 25% for Alabama, Massachusetts and New Hampshire, 23% for Pennsylvania and Connecticut and 21% for Delaware.

According to Mark Wolfe, Executive Director of the National Energy Assistance Directors' Association, the record increase in the number of applicants reflects the continuing deterioration in the nation's economy resulting in higher unemployment and reduced hours of work for many others.

Home energy costs continue to remain at unaffordable levels for many households. Prices are expected to show a modest decrease of only two percent from \$990 to \$971 according to the Energy Information Administration's December Short-Term Energy Outlook. Only families using home heating oil are expected to show a significant drop from \$1953 to \$1570 – and only eight percent of the population uses home heating oil. Average home heating costs are still high by recent averages – the average price for 2002 through 2007 was \$807 as compared to \$971 for the coming winter heating season. For most low income families, these are unaffordable prices. Without LIHEAP assistance, the situation would be even worse.

The State LIHEAP directors, along with the National Association of State Energy Officials and the National Association of State Community Services Directors are calling on the Congress to provide \$2.5 billion in supplemental funding to allow states to reach out to the newly unemployed and help these families pay their home heating and cooling bills during this period of economic crisis

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