

PRESS RELEASE

State LIHEAP Directors Release 2011 National and Connecticut Survey on November 1, 2011

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**Record Heating Oil Prices Place Millions of Poor Families at Risk
New Study Finds that LIHEAP Families are Disproportionally Poor Elderly,
Disabled and Have Young Children**

The National Energy Assistance Directors' Association (NEADA) representing the state directors of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) will be releasing the result of their annual survey on Tuesday, November 1, 2011.

An embargoed copy of the report is attached.

Key Findings:

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is the most comprehensive federal program that helps low-income families meet their immediate home energy needs. The average LIHEAP benefit covers about half the cost of home heating, or \$450 per year per household. Approximately 8.9 million low-income families received assistance in FY 2011 of which 117,000 were served in Connecticut.

Both House and Senate appropriation bill would cut LIHEAP between \$1.1 billion (Senate) and \$1.3 billion (House). The impact of both bills would be dramatic; an estimated 1.6 million very vulnerable households would be cut from the program.

In order to obtain a comprehensive demographic picture of LIHEAP recipients NEADA conducted a survey of approximately 1,800 households that received LIHEAP benefits in FY 2011.

At the request of Rep. DeLauro a separate state study was completed for LIHEAP recipients in CT by congressional district and major city. According to Rep. DeLauro, "This study illustrates just how critical the LIHEAP program is to Connecticut families, and how much of a difference it can make. The tough economy, coupled with high energy prices, make winters in Connecticut very difficult for many residents—and with the first winter storm of the year already approaching the state, the importance of this program is very clear," said Congresswoman DeLauro. "I believe that government has a moral obligation to ensure that our most vulnerable citizens are cared for, and that means funding the LIHEAP program. I urge my colleagues to heed this report, and to fully fund the LIHEAP program."

The following is a summary of the key findings of the Connecticut LIHEAP study:

LIHEAP recipients in CT, like those throughout the country, are likely to have vulnerable household members. Eighty-six percent of LIHEAP recipients in CT have an elderly household member, a disabled household member, or a child in the home.

These households have very low incomes – 69 percent of the recipients in CT have annual household's income of under \$20,000 and 47 percent have income below the poverty level.

Like LIHEAP recipients across the country, recipients in CT were likely to say that their financial situation was worse than it had been the previous year. In the state as a whole, 49 percent of recipients who said it was more difficult to pay energy bills said that their financial situation had worsened.

- LIHEAP recipients in CT reported high energy costs. Over sixty percent of these respondents said that their annual energy costs were more than \$2,000, compared to 53 percent in the Northeast and 45 percent in the U.S.
- LIHEAP has a big impact on CT LIHEAP recipients' energy burden. Only 10 percent of LIHEAP recipients in CT had an energy burden of five percent or less, prior to LIHEAP, but 35 percent had an energy burden of five percent or less after LIHEAP.

Responses to High Energy Costs

LIHEAP recipients in CT sometimes take detrimental actions to meet their energy needs.

- 23 percent said that they kept their home at a temperature that they felt was unsafe or unhealthy during the past year, and 32 percent in District 3 (New Haven) said that they did so.
- 19 percent said they left their home for part of the day because it was too hot or too cold.
- 26 percent said that they used their kitchen oven or stove for heat.

Inability to Pay Energy Bills

LIHEAP recipients experienced instances when they could not afford to pay their energy bills and suffered loss of service.

- 36 percent said that they received a notice or threat to discontinue their electricity or heating fuel.
- 12 percent said that their electric or natural gas service was shut off. 20 percent in District 3 (New Haven) said that their service was shut off compared to 6 percent in District 2 (Groton/Norwich).
- 27 percent said that they were unable to use their main source of heat due to discontinued service or broken equipment. 31 percent of those in District 3 (New Haven) reported this problem, compared to 18 percent in District 4 (Bridgeport/Stamford/Norwalk).

Housing and Financial Problems

LIHEAP recipients in CT face housing and financial problems as a result of unaffordable energy bills. Some of the problems faced in the past five years included the following.

- 38 percent said they did not make a full rent or mortgage payment.
- 5 percent were evicted from their home or apartment.
- 17 percent moved in with family or friends.

Medical and Health Problems

LIHEAP recipients in CT had medical and health problems during the previous five years as a result of their energy bills.

- 25 percent said that they went without food for at least one day. 33 percent in District 3 (New Haven) reported that they faced this problem.
- 29 percent said that they went without medical or dental care.
- 31 percent said that they did not take their prescription medication.

These rates of these problems were similar among LIHEAP recipients in the Northeast and in the U.S.

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