



NATIONAL ENERGY ASSISTANCE DIRECTORS' ASSOCIATION

High Cost of Heat this Winter Will Mean a Cold Holiday Season for Many Families Average Prices Expected to Remain Above \$900

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Contact: Mark Wolfe, 202-625-0308

Home Heating Costs are Unaffordable for Many Low-Income Households

Home heating costs are expected to be high again this year, providing no relief for families that struggle to pay their bills. Households will pay an average of \$911 this season, the third year in a row that heating costs have been above the 10-year average of \$870. But that only tells part of the story. Families that use heating oil or propane are expected to pay an average of \$1,500 over the course of the winter, while families that use natural gas will see heating bills of about \$580.¹ Costs also vary widely between regions and can go up if the winter is colder than expected.

Federal Funding for Energy Assistance will Reach About 1 Out of 6 Eligible Households

The federal program that helps low income families afford their energy bills, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), will yet again leave millions of families out in the cold. According to an analysis by the National Energy Assistance Directors Association (NEADA), there is only enough money in LIHEAP for fiscal year 2020 to reach about one in six eligible households (16.9 percent). That means more than 83 percent of households that should receive help will be forced to choose between paying their heating and cooling bills and paying for other essentials. Furthermore, the funding that is available will only cover about half the cost of heating for the households that do receive assistance, with average the grant of about \$520.

According to NEADA Chair Barb Klug, “Year after year we see families struggling to keep their houses warm in the winter and cool in the summer. LIHEAP can make a huge difference for a family that can’t afford its energy bill, but the current funding level leaves millions of families out in the cold. No child should have to sit at the kitchen table in a coat and gloves to do their homework.”

Congressional Proposals Continue to Underfund LIHEAP

The proposed 2020 funding levels for LIHEAP differ in the House of Representatives and the Senate appropriations bills. The Senate bill would provide \$3.69 billion for LIHEAP for FY 2020, the same level as provided in FY 2019. The House bill would raise the program funding level by \$150 million to \$3.84 billion. The Senate level would allow states to reach about 5.9 million households, the House bill would increase the total by an additional 240,000 households, bringing the total served to 6.14 million. Both proposals are significantly lower than the 2010 funding level of \$5.1 billion, which allowed LIHEAP to reach 7.4 million households.

Attachment: NEADA Data Analysis

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¹ National average price projections prepared by NEADA based on US October 2019 EIA Winter Fuels Outlook.