

National Energy Assistance Directors' Association
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August 31, 2010

The Honorable Barack Obama
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of the directors of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), I am writing to urge you to release all remaining contingency funds to help poor families pay for high cooling bills resulting from very hot temperatures this summer, as well as prepare for upcoming heating costs this winter. Many areas of the country have faced record-breaking heat this summer, and countless families will be facing unaffordable energy bills. Without LIHEAP assistance, they could be facing shut-off just as they begin to prepare for upcoming winter heating bills.

Access to LIHEAP funds to help pay for cooling bills is extremely important to the health of many poor families. Searing temperatures across the United States have put many poor families at risk for heat-related illnesses because they cannot afford the cost of electricity to cool their homes. Those with pre-existing health conditions are most vulnerable to high temperatures.

Public health studies have documented that summer heat and heat waves:

- can lead to hospitalization for those with pre-existing kidney disease, Type 2 diabetes and epilepsy;
- worsen cardiovascular disease (ischemic heart disease), increasing the risk of death from heart attack or stroke; and
- increase the risk of death from pneumonia and other ailments for those with respiratory disease.

For many parts of the nation, especially the Northeast, Midwest and South this has been an extremely warm summer, possibly the hottest on record for the Northeast.

State resources are being stretched because more families are receiving program assistance. For FY 2010, the state directors have reported record numbers of households receiving energy assistance; approximately 8.8 million households, almost 1.2 million more than last year.

Your release of all remaining contingency funds to help low income families pay their high cooling bills from this summer as well as prepare for the upcoming winter heating season can safeguard the health—and the lives—of low income families across the country. Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,

Jo-Ann Choate
Chair