

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **State LIHEAP Directors Release 2011 National Survey**

**Contact: Mark Wolfe, 202-320-9046**

**November 1, 2011**

### **Record Heating Oil Prices Place Millions of Poor Families at Risk New Study Shows 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) released the results of their annual survey of LIHEAP recipients.

#### 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; approximately 10 million households are expected to apply for assistance in FY 2012.

Both the House and Senate appropriation bills would cut LIHEAP between \$1.1 billion (Senate) and \$1.3 billion (House) from the FY 2011 level of \$4.7 billion. 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 and the characteristics of those who are helped as well as who would be hurt by the program cuts, NEADA conducted a survey of approximately 1,800 households that received LIHEAP benefits in FY 2011. The results show that LIHEAP households are among the vulnerable in the country.

In fact, nearly 90 percent of LIHEAP recipient households have at least one vulnerable member—defined as someone age 60 or older, age 18 or younger, or disabled.

Additional findings underscore the fact that, for these households, a loss of heat or electricity in the winter could have serious health and safety implications.

#### LIHEAP Households Are Among the Most Vulnerable in the Country

- 40 percent have someone age 60 or older
- 72 percent have a family member with a serious medical condition
- 26 percent use medical equipment that requires electricity
- 37 percent went without medical or dental care
- 34 percent did not fill a prescription or took less than their full dose of prescribed medication
- 19 percent became sick because the home was too cold
- 85 percent of people with a medical condition are seniors

Other key facts reported by the study:

- 45% reported that their energy bills were more than \$2,000 in the past year.
- 35% were unemployed at some point during the year.
- 52% said that energy bills were more difficult to pay than in the previous year and 48% of those who said that it was more difficult to pay their energy bills reported that the main reason was their financial situation.
- LIHEAP benefits decreased since the previous year due to the smaller appropriation in FY 2011. Mean heating benefits were \$429 in FY 2011, compared to \$483 in FY 2009.
- Many LIHEAP recipients were unable to pay their energy bills. 49% skipped paying or paid less than their entire home energy bill, 37% received a notice or threat to disconnect or discontinue their electricity or home heating fuel, 11% had their electric or natural gas service shut off in the past year due to nonpayment, 24% were unable to use their main source of heat in the past year because their fuel was shut off, they could not pay for fuel delivery, or their heating system was broken and they could not afford to fix it and 17% were unable to use their air conditioner in the past year because their electricity was shut off or their air conditioner was broken and they could not afford to fix it.

End