LIHEAP: Working to Keep Energy Affordable

Electric companies strongly support the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

Millions of American families struggle to afford basic necessities. LIHEAP is a vital source of aid, helping them pay their energy bills and avoid having to choose between energy and other essentials, like food or medicine. Access to affordable energy is a matter of health and safety.

LIHEAP is an essential, widely supported federal program that delivers critical short-term aid to some of our nation’s most vulnerable citizens. Approximately 35 million households across the nation are eligible for LIHEAP assistance. Yet, inadequate funding for the program means that only 6.8 million receive basic help to pay their energy bills.

Each year, electric companies contribute millions of dollars to energy assistance programs for vulnerable customers and provide access to home weatherization programs, but the need for LIHEAP remains critical nationwide. EEI and the National Energy & Utility Affordability Coalition (NEUAC) work together to advocate for LIHEAP funding.

9 out of 10 households
Nine out of 10 households helped by LIHEAP are home to a child under 18, an elderly resident, a veteran, or someone with a disability.
Our Policy Platform

LIHEAP funding is authorized at $5.1 billion per year, and the President and Congress should ensure LIHEAP receives adequate appropriations to help millions of vulnerable Americans.

LIHEAP Funding Is Essential for American Families

Keeping energy affordable is a top priority for America’s electric companies. Electric companies offer programs and services that help low-income customers afford their energy bills and protect their homes from weather extremes.

Despite these efforts, millions of American families need additional assistance to pay for energy. Fortunately, the LIHEAP program exists to provide short-term help to families in distress. Its recipients are among America’s most vulnerable citizens: More than 90 percent of households receiving LIHEAP include at least one person with a disability, a child under 18, a veteran, or a senior citizen.

Households Receiving LIHEAP Assistance

- 36% Include a child under 18
- 46% Include an elderly resident
- >50% Include a person with a disability

Source: 2018 National Energy Assistance Survey, NEUAC

Because of limited funding, the majority of families eligible for LIHEAP aid—four out of every five—do not receive it.

To provide America’s most vulnerable citizens with the heating, lighting, and cooling essential for life, health, and safety, LIHEAP should be funded adequately. Congress should ensure funding for this vital safety-net program and reject any budget that does not help low-income Americans struggling to afford their energy bills.
How LIHEAP Works

LIHEAP distributes funding to states, territories, and tribal governments, which in turn use the funds to help low-income households in their jurisdictions with home heating and cooling costs. LIHEAP funds also are used for emergency situations and for weatherization services.

The need for LIHEAP is immense: fewer than one out of five LIHEAP-eligible households actually receives energy assistance. Unlike some federal assistance programs that see their funding increase with need, like Social Security or food stamps, LIHEAP funding must be appropriated annually by Congress.

To be eligible for LIHEAP assistance, a family may only earn up to 150 percent of the federal poverty level—about $30,000 annually for a family of three—or 60 percent of the state’s median income level. The majority of LIHEAP recipients fall well below the minimum income requirements: four out of five households receiving LIHEAP assistance have an annual income below $20,000.

LIHEAP funding has been cut severely in recent years. In FY 2011, when the funding level was $4.7 billion, only 9 million households received LIHEAP funds. LIHEAP funding for FY 2019 is $3.69 billion, forcing states to drop families from the program, reduce benefits, or both.

Access to affordable energy is a matter of health and safety.

< $20K

Four out of five households helped by LIHEAP have an annual income below $20,000.

Learn More

NEUAC.org

NEUAC, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, is a broad-based coalition dedicated to heightening awareness of the energy needs of low-income energy consumers, to fostering public-private partnerships, and to engaging in other activities to help address these needs.

Electric Perspectives

Electric Perspectives, EEI’s flagship publication, provides insights on the transformation underway across the electric power industry. Available in print and accessible online at electricperspectives.com.

Energy Talk

Get the news you need on LIHEAP, critical policy issues, and electric power industry trends electronically from EEI. Email EnergyTalk@eei.org to subscribe.
About EEI

The Edison Electric Institute (EEI) is the association that represents all U.S. investor-owned electric companies. Our members provide electricity for about 220 million Americans, and operate in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. As a whole, the electric power industry supports more than 7 million jobs in communities across the United States. In addition to our U.S. members, EEI has more than 65 international electric companies with operations in more than 90 countries, as International Members, and hundreds of industry suppliers and related organizations as Associate Members.

Organized in 1933, EEI provides public policy leadership, strategic business intelligence, and essential conferences and forums.

For more information, visit our Web site at www.eei.org.

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