

Issue
#10

Ensuring LIHEAP Works for Florida

FUNDING REQUEST

- **Total Project or Program Cost** - \$5.1 billion
- **Requested Amount for Project or Program** - Highest possible funding level

REQUESTED STATUTORY CHANGE

- Low Income Home Energy Assistance
- For making payments under subsections (b) and (d) of section 2602 of the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Act of 1981 (42 U.S.C. 8621 et seq.), \$5,100,000,000: Provided, That notwithstanding section 2609A(a) of such Act, not more than \$3,500,000 may be reserved by the Secretary of Health and Human Services for technical assistance, training, and monitoring of program activities for compliance with internal controls, policies and procedures and the Secretary may, in addition to the authorities provided in section 2609A(a)(1), use such funds through contracts with private entities that do not qualify as nonprofit organizations: Provided further, That all but \$1,698,598,000 of the amount appropriated under this heading shall be allocated as though the total appropriation for such payments for fiscal year 2026 was less than \$1,975,000,000.

FULL DETAILED BACKGROUND

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), established in 1981 and administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), provides block grant funding to states to assist low-income households with home energy costs. The program is funded annually through the appropriations process and is not an entitlement program. Congress funded LIHEAP at \$4.045 billion in FY 2026.

LIHEAP was designed at a time when heating costs were the predominant concern nationwide. As a result, the allocation formula has historically directed a disproportionate share of funding to colder, northern states. Since its inception, approximately 71% of LIHEAP funding has supported heating assistance, while only 7% has been used to help households pay for air conditioning.

Over the past four decades, population growth patterns and climate risks have shifted significantly. States in the South and Southwest—including Florida, Arizona, and Texas—have experienced rapid population growth, rising energy

demand, and increased exposure to extreme heat. Because appropriations have not consistently reached levels that fully implement the updated allocation formula, states like Florida do not receive the increased share contemplated under the newer methodology.

This has resulted in significant regional inequities. Since 2011, approximately 34% of eligible beneficiaries in states such as Michigan, Vermont, and Wisconsin received assistance, compared to only 4% of eligible recipients in Florida, Arizona, and Texas. This disparity leaves many vulnerable households in hot-weather states without critical energy support.

Extreme heat is consistently identified as the leading cause of weather-related fatalities in the United States. Reliable access to cooling is a matter of public health and safety, particularly for seniors, veterans, children, and medically vulnerable individuals. As climate conditions intensify and energy burdens increase, the limitations of the current formula have become more acute.

LIHEAP has not been meaningfully reauthorized or modernized in over 40 years. Without reform, the program will continue to misalign with current demographic realities and public health risks.

BENEFITS/EXPECTED OUTCOME

- Ensures equitable and needs-based distribution of LIHEAP funding across states.
- Provides Florida and other rapidly growing, heat-vulnerable states with a fair share of resources.
- Strengthens public health protections by recognizing cooling as a life-saving necessity.
- Reduces regional disparities in assistance rates among eligible households.
- Modernizes a 40-year-old federal program to reflect current climate patterns, population growth, and energy usage trends.
- Sustains long-term program stability through comprehensive reauthorization and improved efficiency.

POINT OF CONTACT

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