

# News

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## More Nebraskans get help with energy bills

by Chip Olsen, Omaha World-Herald

The number of Nebraska households receiving energy assistance this year is projected to increase 19.3 percent from last year's numbers, the National Energy Assistance Director's Association said Friday. In Iowa, the increase is projected at 1.5 percent.

The association, which represents the state directors of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, said the projected number of households receiving assistance nationwide this year would be the largest in 16 years. An estimated 5.8 million households will likely receive aid in fiscal year 2008, up 3.8 percent from fiscal year 2007.

"Rising energy prices and a slowing economy are the primary reasons for the growing number of households receiving assistance," said Mark Wolfe, executive director of the association.

Last year in Nebraska, 32,695 households received assistance. That number is projected to be 39,000 this year.

In Iowa, 87,000 households are projected to receive aid this year, compared with 85,692 last year.

Mike Kelly, vice chairman of the Nebraska Energy Assistance Network, said the increase is an estimate of the number of households that will be served the entire energy year, which ends in September.

"It's projected to be that much of an increase compared to the number of households we served last year," **Kelly said.**

## NEADA PRESS RELEASE

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The National Energy Assistance Directors' Association (NEADA), representing the state directors of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), announced today that the number of households receiving LIHEAP funds this year is the highest in 16 years. An estimated 5.8 million households received energy assistance in FY 08, an increase of 3.8 percent over FY 07 (see state-by-state table).

Seventeen states plus the District of Columbia reported increases of more than four percent and eight by more than nine percent: Alabama (11.1%), Georgia (9.1%), Indiana (11.4%), Kansas (6.6%), Michigan (8.5%), Minnesota (4.8%), Mississippi (15.0%), Nebraska (19.3%), Nevada (79.8%), New York (4.9%), North Carolina (5.5%), Oklahoma (44.1%), Oregon (6.4%), Pennsylvania (8.6%), Rhode Island (4.9%), Washington (9.6%) and West Virginia (11.3%) and the District of Columbia (7.9%).

According to Mark Wolfe, Executive Director of NEADA, "rising energy prices and a slowing economy are the primary reasons for the growing number of households receiving assistance, especially for those households using delivered fuel: heating oil, propane and kerosene. Prices for these fuels have reached record levels and place a severe burden on low income families. Combined with increasing prices for gasoline and now food, many low income families are at risk of falling even further into poverty."

LIHEAP's growth rate for FY 08 (3.7 percent) almost matches that of the Food Stamp program (5.1 percent). While the Food Stamp program was able to expand with increasing demand as it is funded on an entitlement basis, LIHEAP is funded as a discretionary grant program and so could not grow similarly.

As utility shut-off moratoriums begin to expire through the middle of May, states are very concerned that many families will face shut-off conditions if Congress does not provide additional funding. Preliminary data suggest that arrearages and shut-offs could reach record levels this year. The members of NEADA call on the President to immediately release remaining emergency funds and the Congress to appropriate at least \$1 billion in additional emergency funds for the remainder of the year.

Preliminary arrearage survey data suggests that millions of families will face the threat of energy shut-off during the next two months if additional funding for LIHEAP is not made available. For example:

- California: 1.7 million households in arrears totaling \$299 million as compared to 1.6 million households with arrears totaling \$284 million last year.
- Iowa: 218,360 households in arrears totaling \$36.5 million as compared to 205,258 with arrears totaling \$31.4 million last year.
- Massachusetts: Approximately 100,000 households in arrears totaling \$100 million as compared to about 95,000 households in arrears totaling \$95 million last year.
- New Mexico: 15,629 households in arrears totaling \$3.9 million as compared to 11,451 households with arrears totaling \$2 million last year.
- Oklahoma: 115,015 households in arrears totaling \$9.2 million as compared to 101,041 households with arrears totaling \$9.2 million last year.
- Pennsylvania: 650,477 households in arrears totaling \$341 million as compared to 497,216 households with arrears totaling \$341 million last year.
- Wisconsin: 42,506 households in arrears totaling \$42.5 million as compared to 39,590 households with arrearages totaling \$11.6 million last year.

End

<b>Est. LIHEAP Households Served by State (FY 07 to FY 08)</b>			
			<b>% Change</b>
	<b>FY07</b>	<b>FY 08</b>	<b>FY 07 toFY 08</b>
Alabama	74,110	82,365	11.1%
Alaska	13,321	13,621	2.3%
Arizona	36,345	23,844	-34.4%
Arkansas	67,453	70,000	3.8%
California	163,756	165,678	1.2%
Colorado	93,485	93,500	0.0%
Connecticut	84,757	86,000	1.5%
Delaware	15,137	14,424	-4.7%
District of Columbia	23,694	25,559	7.9%
Florida	75,534	75,534	0.0%
Georgia	74,938	81,735	9.1%
Hawaii	5,665	5,665	0.0%
Idaho	32,847	32,847	0.0%
Illinois	325,629	326,000	0.1%
Indiana	143,592	160,000	11.4%
Iowa	85,692	87,000	1.5%
Kansas	41,269	43,977	6.6%
Kentucky	108,000	108,000	0.0%
Louisiana	22,014	17,653	-19.8%
Maine	47,300	49,000	3.6%
Maryland	99,982	91,000	-9.0%
Massachusetts	141,393	145,634	3.0%
Michigan	485,148	526,307	8.5%
Minnesota	120,765	126,500	4.7%
Mississippi	53,631	61,675	15.0%
Missouri	124,048	127,000	2.4%
Montana	19,000	19,000	0.0%
Nebraska	32,695	39,000	19.3%
Nevada	6,340	11,398	79.8%
New Hampshire	32,581	34,000	4.4%
New Jersey	180,000	180,000	0.0%
New Mexico	63,000	63,000	0.0%
New York	853,099	895,000	4.9%
North Carolina	318,870	336,522	5.5%
North Dakota	15,184	15,715	3.5%
Ohio	359,851	370,000	2.8%
Oklahoma	85,389	123,000	44.0%
Oregon	57,318	61,000	6.4%
Pennsylvania	366,738	398,374	8.6%
Rhode Island	28,642	30,050	4.9%
South Carolina	18,218	18,218	0.0%
South Dakota	17,321	17,760	2.5%
Tennessee	67,941	68,250	0.5%
Texas	14,400	10,274	-28.7%
Utah	31,324	32,000	2.2%
Vermont	21,405	21,606	0.9%
Virginia	106,001	108,040	1.9%
Washington	64,032	70,167	9.6%
West Virginia	69,496	77,330	11.3%
Wisconsin	145,847	150,000	2.8%
Wyoming	11,700	12,031	2.8%
Total	5,592,268	5,802,253	3.8%

Survey data collected from state LIHEAP agencies during the weeks of April 7 through 24, 2008

Data reflects estimates of households served for heating.

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