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## National Fuel Funds Network

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The Government Accountability Office has released the results of an audit and investigation of the LIHEAP programs in seven states. The report concluded the program was “at risk of fraud and improper payments” in the states that were audited.

The GAO audited LIHEAP programs in Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Ohio and Virginia and determined that 9 percent of the households receiving benefits – totaling \$116 million – contained invalid identify information.

The GAO report offered a series of recommendations designed to eliminate or reduce the risk of fraud and improper payments including requiring states to obtain social security numbers for all members of households applying for LIHEAP assistance and establish systems to prevent applicants from using the identities of deceased persons and to prevent individuals from receiving duplicate payments.

In response to the report, state energy officials announced the formation of a joint task force to address issues concerning waste, fraud and abuse in the program. The National Energy Assistance Directors’ Association (NEADA) in conjunction with the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) will address the risk of fraud and abuse in LIHEAP due to a lack of systematic checking of applications and payments to utility vendors.

“There is no question that all of the state LIHEAP directors strongly support the accurate and appropriate awarding of grants funds,” says Jo-Ann Choate, chair of NEADA. “Any dollar wasted is a dollar that cannot be used to help a needy family have access to energy assistance.”

To that end, the states are requesting full access from GAO to the files in question to assess the accuracy of the review, develop appropriate measures to prevent waste, and eliminate weaknesses in the in-take system.

A summary of the GAO report, a list of the agency’s recommendations and the complete GAO report are available at <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-10-621>. NEADA’s responding press release is at <http://www.neada.org/communications/press/2010-07-02-PressPelease.pdf>. For more information, contact NFFN Executive Director George Coling, [coling@nationalfuelfunds.org](mailto:coling@nationalfuelfunds.org) or 202-824-0660.

## National Energy and Utility Affordability Conference

- A report on the 2010 National Energy and Utility Affordability Conference as well as photos, featured speeches and workshop presentations are available for viewing on the NEUAC website – <<http://www.neuac.org>>. The conference, held last month in San Antonio, attracted more than 600 attendees and featured more than 60 workshops. Photos from the conference are posted on the NFFN's Facebook page.
- Planning has begun for the 2011 National Energy and Utility Affordability Conference to be held at the Marriott Harbor Beach Hotel, Fort Lauderdale June 27-29. Visit <<http://www.neuac.org>> from time to time for an update on conference plans. The NFFN welcomes members' suggestions for possible themes, speakers, and workshop topics. Sponsorship opportunities are available. Contact George Coling, [coling@nationalfuelfunds.org](mailto:coling@nationalfuelfunds.org) or 202-824-0660, at the NFFN office in Washington.

## NFFN Events and Projects

- The NFFN and the American Gas Association and the Edison Electric Institute are organizing the Summer LIHEAP Action Day Wednesday, July 28. The NFFN is asking its members and LIHEAP supporters to come to Washington the 28th to lobby the Congress in support of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. Registration for the Summer LIHEAP Action Day is free and can be done on-line at <<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/D257KZ6>>. American Gas Association staff will make Congressional appointments for registrants.

A block of rooms is reserved at the Liaison Capitol Hill, An Affinia Hotel, 415 New Jersey Ave., NW (1 block from AGA) for \$189 per night. To reserve a room call 1-866-233-4642 and refer to the American Gas Association rate or log on to <<http://www.affinia.com>> and select the Liaison Capitol Hill. Enter **AMGASS** as the promo code.

- The National Fuel Funds Network will hold its traditional LIHEAP Action Day February 9, 2011 in the nation's Capital. Please save the date on your calendars now, and include the trip to Washington in your 2011 budget. The Network will send registration and hotel information to members in August.
- The NFFN is kicking off a membership drive to build and expand its base. "The strength of our efforts to build charitable contributions for energy assistance and do our work to grow federal energy aid depends on their growth and diversity of our membership," said Tom Stovall, NFFN Board Chairman. "I urge all NFFN members to help us increase our membership. Please refer your corporate and agency partners to our website, contact our staff if you need promotional material and share with the staff any ideas you may have to include to the energy assistance community in our ranks." An NFFN membership application form is available at <http://www.nationalfuelfunds.org/Membership/APPLICATIONFORMBSP2007.pdf>
- In August, the NFFN will circulate a membership survey designed to gauge the effectiveness of the NFFN's programs. Please look for this important survey and take a few

minutes to complete and return it.

### **Fuel Fund Actions**

· The WV Utility Assistance Program has received \$500,000 from Allegheny Energy's Trans Allegheny Interstate Line Company subsidiary to help low-income West Virginia families, individuals and seniors maintain or restore basic electric service. The funds are expected to provide aid to approximately 1,600 households. Beginning July 1 2010, funds will be distributed as grants through the West Virginia Utility Assistance Program and will help approximately 1,600 households. If you or someone you know needs help click on the attached link for eligibility guidelines and our agency finder.

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