



Energy Assistance Targeted By Washington Budget Cutters

By Ivan Brandon, National Fuel Funds Network

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) has become a target of budget cutters in the White House and Capitol Hill, who want to slash the program by 50 percent, despite the fact that a record number of households received assistance this winter.

In February, President Obama unveiled his FY 2012 budget, which calls for reducing LIHEAP funding from the current level of \$5.1 billion to \$2.37 billion. The president explained the proposed cuts by saying funding for LIHEAP was increased three years ago because of a spike in energy prices and the proposed cut “returns LIHEAP funding to historic levels

received for 2008” before energy prices increased.

Republicans, who hold a majority in the House of Representatives, have made it known that they want to return all government spending to the 2008 levels as part of their plans to reduce the government’s budget deficit.

Both the president’s proposal and the Republicans’ plan have been met with opposition from some members of Congress and from LIHEAP supporters. The supporters point out that funding cuts of this magnitude would have a disastrous impact on the program and would be devastating to the millions of people who turn to LIHEAP to keep their homes safe and livable.

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SPOTLIGHT ON PARTNERSHIPS

Featuring businesses, cities or individuals who are making a difference in the lives of others

“I am my Brother’s Keeper” – Raising Dollars to Help Neighbors in Need

For cities around the state, this statement holds true – “I am my brother’s keeper.” The spotlight shines in this issue on cities that have achieved excellent results from activities they implemented to help their neighbors in need.

The cities of **Perry, Tifton, Claxton and Winder** raised 50 percent of the more than \$23,000 that H.E.A.T. received over the past year from municipality-aided fundraisers. Here’s how they did it:

Bill Donation Program – Perry’s and Claxton’s silver bullet has been providing their customers with the convenience of contributing through their utility bill. Once a customer signs up to donate a designated amount, the donation is added to their amount due and then later submitted to H.E.A.T. To kick off their program, the cities mailed letters to customers inviting them to participate. In addition, the City of Claxton advertised on cable television and in the local newspaper to promote awareness. Over the past year, nearly \$7,000 has been raised through the efforts of both cities.

Special Events – Participating in the annual fall Jug Tavern Festival has proven to be a winner for the City of Winder. Under the leadership of the city’s natural gas director, Mike Jewell, the Natural Gas Department worked tirelessly to sell \$1 tickets for a grand prize drawing. Ticket purchasers could win a grand prize such as a 42-inch flat screen TV, as well as other prizes. All prizes for the drawings were donated by area businesses; therefore, 100 percent of the proceeds went to help families in need. In addition to having an attention-getting booth filed with informational posters and handouts about H.E.A.T., to entice festival goers to stop by, a Dunk Tank was a real show stopper! Kids and adults contributed \$1 for three chances to soak a city employee. The nearly \$1,500 raised from last fall’s ticket sales and



Winder’s Gas Department Crew Foreman Ted Tillery challenges visitors to dunk him while raising donations for H.E.A.T.

Dunk Tank was matched by the City, yielding a \$3,000 contribution.

H.E.A.T. Bill Insert and Business Financial Support – Under the leadership of Jacqueline Gurz in the county’s utilities department, Tifton is a contender for the Municipal Gas Authority of Georgia’s annual H.E.A.T. Award. In early fall Tifton sends a personalized appeal letter to utility customers and places a donation box at the bill payment window in City Hall. In addition, they appeal to businesses for support. Getting local print and radio media involved has been a key strategy to heighten public awareness and motivate citizens to contribute. Over the past five years, Tifton averaged nearly \$3,800 in H.E.A.T. contributions per year.

Other cities that have raised \$1,800 to \$3,400 by engaging in similar activities are *Douglas, Lawrenceville and Covington*.

Regardless of the amount raised, we are grateful to all cities that conducted activities to help families get through one of the most difficult winters ever.

From the Executive Director

Finally, the mounds of snow and ice are gone, and spring is in the air! We survived one of the most frigid winters in Georgia's history. And thanks to your unwavering support, H.E.A.T. was able to distribute \$535,000 to more than 1,500 residents who might not have made it through last winter. We heard numerous expressions of appreciation from our recipients, like this one from Arthur Green, whose story is featured in the article below –

"It is really comforting to know that there are people out there who really care about helping others. It is so appreciated and needed."

I noticed something surprising this past winter: the faces of those who came to us for help had changed. They were from all ethnic backgrounds and walks of life, not just senior citizens and single mothers, but male heads of households, two-parent families, and others who had never needed assistance before. Most of the families we served fell into one of the following categories: *unemployed, working poor, or fixed income*, which showed that this change was partially due to Georgia's stubbornly high unemployment rate.

In other cases, unexpected circumstances such as high

medical bills or a debilitating illness transformed already vulnerable situations into a crisis.

When a family struggles to keep the heat on, it has far-reaching impacts on the individuals involved and the communities where they live. That's why your gift truly makes a profound difference in the lives of others. We echo Mr. Green in saying "Thank you." We couldn't do it without you!

Janet H. Joseph
Janet H. Joseph
Executive Director

Georgia Public Service Commission Accepts Appreciation



H.E.A.T. recipient Arthur Green expresses appreciation for the energy assistance he received.

Giving thanks – the most humble gesture one can perform in gratitude for blessings received. That is what happened on March 1, 2011 at the Georgia Public Service Commission's (PSC's) Administrative Session, when Arthur Green and Carmen Robles publicly thanked the Commission for directing nearly \$640,000 in charitable funds to H.E.A.T. over the past two years.

Though she was a bit nervous, Ms. Robles, a prior H.E.A.T. recipient, mustered the courage to personally thank the PSC for its part in helping her through a very difficult time in her life.

Mr. Green not only thanked the PSC, but shared his story as well:

Mr. Green believes every household should have, and live by, a budget. Unfortunately, the unusually harsh winter made it impossible for him to predict his energy costs and budget appropriately for it. He spent the majority of his life – 46 years – working for Federated Logistics-Macy's. When he exhausted his retirement benefits, he realized there was no way he could cover all of his monthly expenses on his fixed income from social security.

Knowing that some tough decisions had to be made, Mr. Green eventually realized he had no choice but to sell his car. But even after making this sacrifice, he still didn't have enough money to pay his energy bills.

After learning about H.E.A.T., Mr. Green applied for and was given the help he needed. "It lifted a burden. I didn't have to stress over whether I would be warm during the cold winter months," he told H.E.A.T. and the Commission.

At the session, Mr. Green thanked the Commission, Georgia citizens, natural gas providers, and everyone else who donated to H.E.A.T., not only for the help he received, but on behalf of all those who have been helped.

The epitome of "giving thanks," Mr. Green's emotional parting words summed up his gratitude best: "It is really comforting to know that there are people out there who really care about helping others. It is so appreciated and needed."



Donate to H.E.A.T. Many less fortunate families need your help today.

Donate online at www.heatga.org or complete this form and mail it with your check to the address below.

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Address _____

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H.E.A.T.

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Simple Ways to Gain Control of Home Cooling Costs

Over the past few months, many events have occurred that have led to an increase in energy costs. Although some of these events are uncontrollable, there are still many ways you can take control and reduce your energy consumption without being very uncomfortable this summer. Here are a few tips that could add up to cool savings this summer –

- Set your thermostat at 78° F or higher. If you still have a manually operated thermostat, consider replacing it with an electronic one. By automatically setting the inside temperatures to go up and go down at strategic times of the day (like just before you come home from work), you'll be able to cool down the house without wasting energy.
- Replace air filters once a month to help your system run more efficiently. If you have pleated filters, change them at least every three months.
- Make sure your furniture is not blocking cooling vents.
- Close the curtains on sun-exposed windows.
- Take advantage of the beautiful summer weather and grill outdoors in order to decrease cooling consumption indoors.
- Install ceiling fans in your home. They are energy efficient and improve the comfort level of any room. Even if your home has air-conditioning, a properly utilized fan can save you a significant amount on energy cost.
- When purchasing a new appliance, be sure to select the most energy efficient model possible. Compare the yellow Energy Guide stickers on different models. A \$25 difference in annual energy costs between models becomes a significant energy savings over the 10 to 15 year life span of the appliance.

Financing Available to Help Georgia Homeowners Save Energy and Money

ATLANTA – The Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) encourages Georgians to take advantage of zero-interest financing options to help make their homes more energy efficient and to save money on their utility bills. Financing is available now through Oglethorpe Power Corporation, Electric Cities of Georgia, Municipal Gas Authority of Georgia and Estes Heating & Air.

The residential energy efficiency financing programs, which are funded through GEFA as a result of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), allow homeowners to apply for funding to complete a number of improvement projects, including air sealing and insulating their homes; installing energy-efficient heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC) systems; and purchasing eligible ENERGY STAR appliances. Services and available funding vary by program.

Interested homeowners are encouraged to contact their electric and/or gas provider for more information on available energy-efficiency loan programs. Low-income homeowners may also be eligible for the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP), which provides weatherization services for income-eligible households. Contact information for WAP agencies is available at www.gefa.org.

H.E.A.T. Board Adds New Members

H.E.A.T. has appointed new board members to help further its mission of providing energy assistance for Georgians in need. We welcome the following members to our team:

Meredith Hodges is currently the Vice President of External Affairs and Human Resources of Gas South, LLC. She has 20 years of experience in the utility industry for both electricity and natural gas in functions including economic development, human resources, external affairs and sales.

Ms. Hodges is a founding officer of Gas South, which purchased the majority of assets of Southern Company Gas in 2006, and her department has a myriad of responsibilities including all HR functions, the company's regulatory and legislative interface, and coordinating the company's chamber, community involvement and charitable giving. She also serves as the Corporate Secretary.



In addition to her work on the job, Ms. Hodges has been appointed by the Governor to the Professional Standards Committee; is Chair of the Atlanta Firms Committee for the Woodruff Arts Center Annual Fundraising Campaign; and serves on the Metro Atlanta Chamber Education Committee.

Ms. Hodges has a bachelor's degree from Washington & Lee University and a master's degree in Human Resource Development from Georgia State. She has been interviewed and cited in the book *Shaping your HR Role*, by Kahnweiler and Kahnweiler 2005, received a Pathbuilder's Inspiria Award in 2009 and maintains that coaching and developing people is her real passion.

Danny Davis, currently CEO of Proving Ground, has over 13 years of experience as a successful entrepreneur, technology solutions architect, and leader. After earning an undergraduate degree and completing graduate studies in computer science in 1998, Mr. Davis co-founded Spunlogic, a specialized web development and interactive agency in Atlanta, GA. The agency was acquired in 2007 by Engauge, a nationally recognized agency based in Columbus, OH. During his time at Spunlogic, Mr. Davis served as CTO, leading most of the major technology endeavors while growing one of the largest and most respected interactive marketing technology departments among the privately held agencies in Atlanta.



After a two year post-acquisition transition, Danny has decided to pursue his entrepreneurial passion again as co-founder of Proving Ground, established in 2010. Proving Ground is a technology partner for business savvy entrepreneurs and innovators who need help enabling their business models.

Mr. Davis received a B.S. degree in Computer Science, with minors in Math and English, from Limestone College, where he graduated Suma Cum Laude. After one year in graduate school at the University of North Carolina Charlotte, he returned to Atlanta to help co-found Spunlogic.

Helping low-income Georgians meet their energy needs

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Energy Assistance

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When funded at \$5.1 billion, LIHEAP provided assistance to only one out of every five eligible households. Without access to LIHEAP funding more people would turn to charitably funded assistance programs like H.E.A.T. While charitably funded assistance programs across the country raise and administer more than \$150 million annually, this is hardly enough to fill the gap caused by the proposed cuts in LIHEAP funding.

Mark Wolfe, executive director of the National Energy Assistance Directors Association, said reducing funding for LIHEAP to \$2.37 billion would result in more than 3 million households, or 12 million people, going without assistance in paying their utility bills and a reduction in the size of assistance grants.

In Georgia the proposed funding cuts would leave nearly 170,000 households without assistance compared with last winter.

LIHEAP supporters disagree with the White House assertion that energy prices have gone down and point to the fact that the price of home heating oil, propane and electricity still remain high. They also take note of the unsettled situation in the Middle East, which could lead to increased energy costs.

Congress will begin working on the appropriations bills that fund the government later this year and the question of cutting funding for LIHEAP may not be resolved until August or September.

LIHEAP supporters across the country are working hard to save this vital program. You can help by calling or writing the members of your Congressional delegation and urging them to support \$5.1 billion for LIHEAP for FY 2012.

The H.E.A.T. Factor is a newsletter published for friends and supporters of H.E.A.T., Inc.

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Our mission is to provide energy assistance for Georgians in need.

H.E.A.T., Inc. is a 501 (c) (3) statewide nonprofit organization that raises funds to help Georgians who need temporary financial assistance with energy bills. Thousands of households need help, but only limited funding is available.



www.heatga.org