



MEDIA RELEASE

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For more information:
Jonathan Shapiro (404) 525-1085 ext. 15

Georgia Watch Calls Upon PSC to Release Funds for Low-Income Energy Assistance

ATLANTA – Georgia Watch is calling upon the Public Service Commission (PSC) to disburse funds from the Universal Service Fund (USF) so the state can assist a greater number of cash-strapped natural gas customers struggling to keep their heat on through the ongoing severe weather conditions.

“At a time when temperatures are at an all-time low and people’s homes are in desperate need of heating, the PSC needs to act quickly and generously so that the most vulnerable Georgians aren’t left out in the cold,” Georgia Watch Consumer Energy Program director Clare McGuire said.

Georgia Watch is requesting the PSC release \$7 million from the Universal Service Fund, which as of December 2010 totaled approximately \$30 million.

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, or LIHEAP, is a federal program that was created to assist low-income households pay their heating bills. The Georgia Department of Human Services administers the federal LIHEAP program by disbursing funds to community action agencies throughout the state. Any funds that the PSC approves for disbursement from the USF are used to supplement the federal LIHEAP funds. By Georgia law, one of the primary purposes of the USF is to assist low-income residential consumers in times of emergency.

The current situation across the state is dire. Many community action agencies are reporting unprecedented demand and dwindling funds. Joyce Dorsey, CEO of the Fulton Atlanta Community Action Agency, has stated that recent demand for energy assistance is the worst she’s seen in 20 years.

LIHEAP funds are disbursed on a first-come, first-serve basis and available from November 1st to March 31st. To qualify, the natural gas service must be individually metered and in the customer’s name. Residents can apply for LIHEAP heating assistance at their local Community Action Agency. Residents must bring:

- Proof of income for all household members for the past 30 days
- Proof of Social Security number for each person in the household
- Your last month’s heating bill for the household
- Proof of citizenship or legal immigrant status

More information about LIHEAP can be found on the Public Service Commission’s website, www.psc.state.ga.us, and at www.liheap.org.

Founded in 2002, Georgia Watch is a nonprofit, nonpartisan 501-(c)(3) watchdog group focusing on consumer education and research in the areas of health care, insurance, identity theft, consumer energy issues and personal finance.

Qualified households must meet the following eligibility criteria in order to apply for LIHEAP energy assistance:

- \$21,940 for a one-person household
- \$28,691 for a two-person household
- \$35,442 for a three-person household
- \$42,193 for a four-person household
- \$48,944 for a five-person household
- \$55,695 for a six-person household
- \$56,961 for a seven-person household
- \$58,226 for an eight-person household