



Energy Outreach Colorado

Helping all Coloradans afford home energy.

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## House Bill 12-1028 Continuation of Low-income Energy-related Assistance

Rep. Cheri Gerou/Sen. Pat Steadman

HB 12-1028 is a simple extension of funding authority for a program providing energy assistance to vulnerable Colorado households, using available surplus funds in the operating account of the severance tax trust fund. **This bill extends that spending authority, which is slated to sunset in SFY 2012 – 2013, for five years.** Originally adopted in 2006, this program was renewed by the legislature in 2008 and again extended in 2009. Colorado statute specifically identifies low-income energy assistance as an appropriate use of the severance tax trust fund (C.R.S. 39-29-109 (1)). In fact, Colorado has funded energy assistance from severance tax funds with bipartisan support dating back to 2001.

### HB 12-1028:

- **Extends the program** through SFY 2018.
- **Makes no change to the distribution of funding** for low-income emergency assistance or energy efficiency.
- **Makes no change to requirements that a minimum balance exist in the operational account surplus** prior to distributions to the State LEAP program, the Governor's Energy Office and Energy Outreach Colorado.
- **Offers no guarantee that, based on the State's overall fiscal condition, funds otherwise slated to be distributed will not be transferred to other uses.**

The impact of not being able to pay for home energy on vulnerable seniors, working families and disabled people is profound.

- **Inability to pay for home energy is the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of homelessness** in Colorado for families with children. (University of Colorado Health Science Center)
- **Low-income households must often choose heat and food.** As home energy expenditures increase 20%, food expenditures decrease 10%. (U.S. Department of Labor – Bureau of Labor Statistics)
- In order to pay for home energy, **42% of assistance recipients went without medical or dental care, or failed to fill a medical prescription or took less than the full dose of prescribed medicine.** (National Energy Assistance Directors' Association)
- "The reality is that America's low-income families must struggle constantly to protect their children from multiple threats to their health and growth, of which **energy insecurity may be the most immediately life-threatening**". (Children's Sentinel Nutrition Assessment Program)

Federal funding for LEAP has been cut one-fourth from last winter's level and federal funding for low-income weatherization cut by two-thirds. The solution is two-fold. In the short term, provide emergency assistance to vulnerable households and take steps to make homes more energy efficient and safe for the long term. HB 12-1028 continues Colorado's effort to provide both solutions.

In support of HB 12-1028 are: **AARP Colorado, Atmos Energy, Colorado Environmental Coalition, Colorado Oil and Gas Assn., Colorado Springs Municipal Utilities, Denver Urban Ministries, Energy Outreach Colorado, Lutheran Advocacy Ministry, Xcel Energy**

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