

NEADA | For LIHEAP, (<https://neada.org/>), Creates Water Pilots

August 10, 2021

Today the U.S. Senate passed a bipartisan \$1 trillion infrastructure bill that represents one of President Biden's biggest policy priorities and has been hotly debated in Congress this summer. The bill must next go to the House for approval, which is not certain.

Senate Version of Infrastructure Package:

- Adds \$500 Million for LIHEAP Over 5 Years
- Provides \$3.5B for WAP
- Creates Water Assistance Needs Study & 40 Pilot Projects

LIHEAP

The bill includes an additional \$100 million for LIHEAP each year for fiscal years (FFY) 2022 through 2026, for a total of \$500 million. All of the funds are to be available through September 2026. The bill language is on Page 2618-2619

(https://www.epw.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/e/a/ea1eb2e4-56bd-45f1-a260-9d6ee951bc96/F8A7C77D69BE09151F210EB4DFE872CD.edw21a09.pdf#page=2618).

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The bill includes \$5.5 billion for the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP), which is a ten-fold increase in the program that received \$310 million in FFY 2021. Page 1731-1732 (<https://neada.org/>) (https://www.epw.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/e/a/ea1eb2e4-56bd-45f1-a260-9d6ee951bc96/F8A7C77D69BE09151F210EB4DFE872CD.edw21a09.pdf#page=1731).

Water

The bill has an entire section on water infrastructure beginning on page 1887 (https://www.epw.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/e/a/ea1eb2e4-56bd-45f1-a260-9d6ee951bc96/F8A7C77D69BE09151F210EB4DFE872CD.edw21a09.pdf#page=1887) that includes reduction of lead and other contaminants, resiliency of water infrastructure, other measures, and the following two provisions concerning low-income water assistance:

- *Water Assistance Needs Study* – The bill includes a needs study for low-income water assistance that sets out to define water affordability and identify the need for a water assistance program. Page 1917-1923 (https://www.epw.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/e/a/ea1eb2e4-56bd-45f1-a260-9d6ee951bc96/F8A7C77D69BE09151F210EB4DFE872CD.edw21a09.pdf#page=1917).
- *Water Assistance Pilot Program* – Based on the results of the needs study, EPA would provide funding for up to 40 pilot programs around the country to provide water assistance through bill assistance, a percent of income payment plan, rate reductions, hardship provisions, a lifeline rate, or utility debt relief. Page 1923-1929 (https://www.epw.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/e/a/ea1eb2e4-56bd-45f1-a260-9d6ee951bc96/F8A7C77D69BE09151F210EB4DFE872CD.edw21a09.pdf#page=1923).

All of the water provisions are under the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), not the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) who oversees the current COVID-19 emergency water assistance program.

We will continue to provide updates on this bill as it continues through the legislative process.

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