



## COVID-19 RELIEF/RECOVERY

**Utilities: Keep the Lights On and the Water Running in America.** Even before COVID, nearly [1 in 3 households reported challenges in paying energy bills](#). State utility disconnection moratoriums are [expiring](#). The lights will go out and the water will stop flowing unless Congress acts.

- Increase funding for [energy](#) and [water](#) assistance programs to meet the upsurge in need, as in [Sec. 120403](#) and [Sec. 190703](#) of the HEROES Act.
- Eliminate barriers to access to energy and water assistance programs due to immigration status.

**Telecommunications: Bridge the Digital Divide & Keep Kids Learning.** 59% of lower income parents say their child [may face digital obstacles in schoolwork](#).

- Establish an [emergency broadband benefit](#) and expand the [Lifeline program](#) to help school children and low-income families afford basic telephone and broadband service such as in [Sec. 130301 of the HEROES Act](#).

**Weatherize Homes: Lower Household Utility Bills and Reduce Emissions While Investing in Workers.**

- Increase funding for low-income [weatherization](#), on the scale of [funding provided in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 \(ARRA\)](#), to reduce the amount of energy used in homes, lower household utility bills, support the growth of [community-based green jobs](#) and kickstart the recovery from the COVID economic turndown.
- Eliminate barriers to access to weatherization services due to immigration status.

## FIRST 100 DAYS

**The Federal Communications Commission should:**

- **Address the digital divide by providing affordable broadband**
  - Establish an emergency Lifeline broadband benefit, similar to the emergency Lifeline benefit enhancement in response to Hurricane Katrina.
  - Open a rulemaking to explore upgrading the Lifeline program to provide low-income households with comparable broadband service to non-low-income households, including the coverage of devices and an adequate benefit amount.
  - Immediately close the Lifeline proceedings that have threatened to destabilize the Lifeline program these last three years (e.g., [FCC 17-155](#) (Dec. 1, 2017), [FCC 19-46](#) (May 31, 2019), and [FCC 19-111](#) (Nov. 14, 2019)).
- **Stop the onslaught of robocalls**
  - Clarify that the requirement for consent for robocalls cannot be waived, and that consent can always be revoked in a reasonable manner.
  - Clarify that only smartphones actually used to make *en masse* calls meet the definition of an automated telephone dialing system.

- Clarify that when a consumer provides written consent for telemarketing calls, that consent only applies to the single telemarketer to whom the consumer directly provided consent.

### **The Department of Energy, to equitably address climate change, should:**

- Help consumers reduce carbon emissions and save money by updating the overdue appliance standards of over two dozen products, undo regressive actions DOE has taken to undermine standards, and [put the Department's appliance efficiency standard back on course](#).
- Develop strong public policies and programs to protect the health and safety of residential energy consumers (especially low-income consumers) by collecting monthly past due arrearage and disconnection data for electric and gas utilities. The raw data should be at the zip code level and made public.
- Encourage and incentivize utilities to spend more money on energy efficiency investments by highlighting the best practices in leading states such as Massachusetts, New York, and California, and provide technical and policy assistance to willing utilities.
- Establish a working group with EPA and DOT to develop plans to equitably advance transportation electrification, prioritizing the needs of communities of color and low-income households.
- When considering actions to address climate change, focus on the needs of Black and Brown communities that have been disproportionately harmed by pollution and climate impacts, while shielding these communities from financial harm.

### **The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission should:**

- Launch a rulemaking to establish an Office of Public Participation, as Congress mandated in 1978 and as 31 public interest groups requested in a [2016 Petition](#), so that residential ratepayers will be represented in proceedings regarding the wholesale energy market which has a very large impact on residential consumer energy bills.

### **The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) should:**

- Establish robust consumer protection Ability to Repay rules for Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) loans ([NCLC/NHLP comments](#) and [Coalition comments](#)). Government-backed loans should not be made on properties with liens secured by PACE loans until such consumer protection rules are in place.
- Ensure that any green home financing programs align with consumer protection and remain keyed to the borrower's ability to repay and the fair market value of the property. Additional measures to promote energy efficiency in the residential market can include expansion of weatherization, low-rate loans and rebates, subsidies from utilities, and updating of appliance efficiency standards.

### **The Federal Trade Commission should:**

- Investigate companies that sell competitive energy supply to residential customers in states with deregulated utility markets, to address violations of law related to deceptive in-person and telemarketing sales by competitive supply companies and their third-party marketing companies.