



**Rural residents spend disproportionate amounts on household energy, study finds.**

Rural U.S. households spend a disproportionately high share of their incomes on energy bills, according to a new [report](#) by the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy and Energy Efficiency for All. Low-income rural households spend a median 9% of their incomes on home energy, almost three times larger than the proportion for their higher-income counterparts. Other rural residents hit particularly hard include elderly, nonwhite, and renting households, as well as those living in multifamily and manufactured homes. [\*The High Cost of Energy in Rural America: Household Energy Burdens and Opportunities for Energy Efficiency\*](#) includes suggestions to improve energy efficiency incentives and affordability.

**Persons with temporary farmworker visas now eligible for USDA-financed housing.**

USDA's FY18 [funding bill](#) makes workers admitted to the U.S. on [H-2A visas](#) eligible to live in Section 514/516 farmworker housing. [This month](#) USDA issued [guidance](#) on implementing this change. Employers, who must sponsor H-2A workers and are [responsible](#) for providing housing, may be required to sign leases as guarantors. For more information, contact a USDA RD [state office](#).

**USDA to institute guarantee fee for information technology enhancements.**

USDA [intends](#) to begin on January 2, 2019 collecting a guarantee underwriting user fee from lenders using the Section 502 guarantee program. Authorized in the 2016 Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act, the funds will be used for future information technology enhancements. USDA expects to levy a \$25 fee; the authorized amount can be up to \$50. [Comments](#) are due September 11. For more information, contact [Kate Jensen](#), USDA, 503-894-2382.

**House bill would authorize new housing mobility funds.**

The Housing Choice Voucher Mobility Demonstration Act ([H.R. 5793](#)), which passed the House on July 10, would authorize funding for a new housing mobility demonstration program to encourage families with Housing Choice Vouchers to move to lower-poverty areas. The Senate has not yet begun considering the bill.

**GAO releases new auditing standards.**

[\*Government Auditing Standards 2018 Revision\*](#), known as the Yellow Book, provides standards and guidance for audits of federal, state, and local government programs. It was last updated in 2011. For more information, contact [GAO](#), 202-512-9535.

**Guide aims to help tribes increase homeownership.**

[\*Tribal Leaders Handbook on Homeownership\*](#), published by the Center for Indian Country Development at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, describes mortgage programs and lenders, and offers case studies.

**House committee hears testimony on rural broadband.**

The House Energy and Commerce Committee held a hearing July 17 titled [Realizing the Benefits of Rural Broadband: Challenges and Solutions](#). Witnesses agreed that rural places need reliable broadband access and described how different types of technologies could help.

**Child poverty remains higher than before recession.**

USDA's [Economic Research Service](#) reports that almost 20% of U.S. children lived in poverty in 2016, compared to 18% in 2007. Child poverty rates are highest in the South and Southwest, particularly in counties with concentrations of Native Americans and along the Mississippi Delta. Children in poverty tend to live in nonmetro counties – many with persistently high poverty – that were hard hit by the recession.

**HAC offers Section 502 packaging training in September.**

This three-day advanced course trains experienced participants to assist potential borrowers and work with RD staff, other nonprofits, and regional intermediaries to deliver successful Section 502 loan packages. The registration fee is \$750. The training will be held September 24-26 in Liverpool, NY. For more information, contact HAC staff, 404-892-4824.

**Deadline extended to nominate local and national leaders for HAC awards.**

HAC is still accepting nominations for its 2018 Cochran/Collings National Service and Skip Jason Community Service Leadership Awards. The awards will be presented at the 2018 HAC Rural Housing Conference in December. Past awardees are listed on HAC's site. Complete the online nomination form. For more information, contact Lilla Sutton, HAC, 202-842-8600.

**Save the date for the 2018 HAC Rural Housing Conference!**

The conference will be held December 4-7 at the Capital Hilton in Washington, DC. The HAC News will announce when conference registration opens and when the hotel room block is available for reservations.

**Need capital for your affordable housing project?**

HAC's loan funds provide low interest rate loans to support single- and multifamily affordable housing projects for low-income rural residents throughout the U.S. and territories. Capital is available for all types of affordable and mixed-income housing projects, including preservation, farmworker, senior, and veteran housing. HAC loan funds can be used for pre-development, site acquisition, site development, and construction/rehabilitation. Contact HAC's loan fund staff at haclloanfund@ruralhome.org, 202-842-8600. *Please note: HAC is not able to offer loans to individuals or families. Borrowers must be nonprofit or for-profit organizations or government entities (including tribes).*