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FOR RELEASE AT WILL

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AS THE WINTER CHILL SETS IN, THERE'S A NEW BENEFIT TO WARM THE HEARTS OF LOW-INCOME RESIDENTS: LOWER HEATING AND UTILITY COSTS

EDISON — The latest newsletter of Legal Services of New Jersey (LSNJ) centers on changes that will make many more low-income New Jerseyans eligible for substantially-reduced electric, gas and water costs, as well as possibly getting forgiven for past unpaid bills.

The bilingual publication, “Looking Out For Your Legal Rights,” may be viewed online at www.lsnjlaw.org.

The major changes are part of Covid aid efforts and many will be in effect until September 30, 2023. The newsletter spells out how to apply for the changes, the financial eligibility requirements for applicants, and numerous other significant details available by contacting many listed sources, including the LSNJLAWSM Hotline, www.lsnjlawhotline.org or calling 1-888-576-5529.

The newsletter focuses on the two most vastly expanded electric and gas assistance programs, which, in combination, effectively make many more low-income residents eligible for increasing credits on their utility bills. At the same time a procedure, known as “fresh start,” is established, allowing customers to erase what they owe for past unpaid bills.

The two key programs are the Universal Service Fund (USF) and the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). The program information telephone number for the two services is 1-800-510-3102.

A significant increase in the income qualifying rates is the major reason why so many more New Jerseyans are now eligible. The newsletter includes charts listing the revised income levels for various size families.

There also are details about other utility-related programs and services.

Additionally, the December publication offers articles dealing with changes in Social Security disability rules, the resumption of debt collections by the Veterans Administration, and how people representing themselves in court may do legal research on the web.

Legal Services of New Jersey (LSNJ), located in Edison, heads the state's Legal Services system, a network of six independent nonprofit corporations and has been providing free essential legal aid in civil matters to low-income people through offices in all 21 counties for 55 years. Since its inception, LSNJ has provided representation in more than 2.7 million cases.

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