

Iowa and Midwest could be left out in cold

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DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) -- Iowa and other snow states could be left out in the cold, while warm weather states could see a windfall when it comes to federal money to help low-income people with their energy bills.

Under an obscure formula in a budget bill now in Congress, Iowa would see a three-percent increase this year. Arizona and Florida would see their pot of aid skyrocket by over 170 percent.

The analysis is by the liberal-leaning Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

Higher demand is expected this winter because natural gas prices are soaring.

The center says the southern-northern disparity would occur because the formula used to distribute money changes when the total allocation tops \$1.97 billion.

At that point, greater weight is given to assistance needed for poor people coping with "cooling days" when temperatures top 65 degrees, as well as other factors that favor Sun Belt states.

The center's Richard Kogan says the formula was written more than 20 years ago, and the effects are unclear because formula money doesn't usually top the threshold.

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