

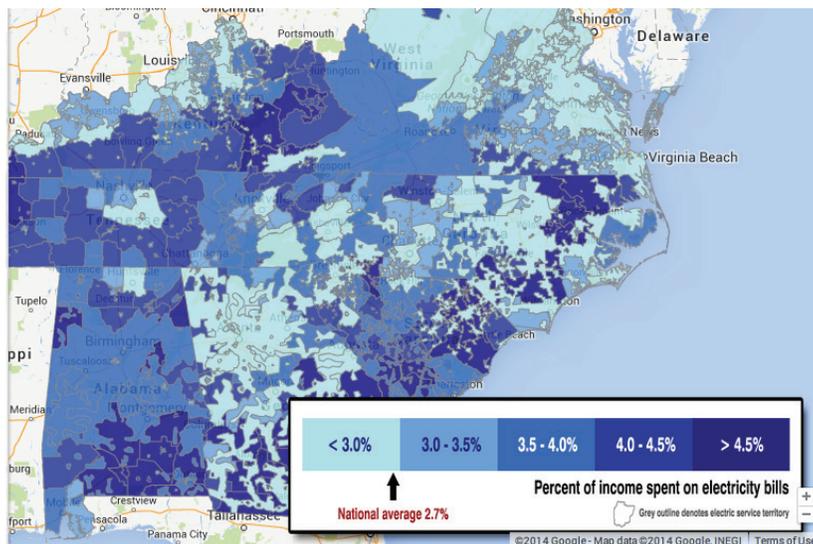
# High Country Home Energy Makeover Contest



## The Poverty / Electricity Costs Connection

Families in the Southeast pay a higher percentage of their income for electricity compared to the national average. The families with the highest burden of electricity costs are primarily located in areas served by rural electric membership cooperatives (co-ops).

- The national average poverty rate was 15.9% (in 2011). The average poverty rate in areas served by Southeastern electric co-ops was 17.9% (in 2012). That rate is 7% higher than the average poverty rate in areas served by Southeastern investor-owned utilities.
- The average U.S. household spent 2.7% of family income on electricity and gas bills in 2012. In the Southeast, residents spent an average of 3.0% of their income on electricity costs alone.
- For low-income families, electric bills can be as high as 20% of household income, and as much as 60% to 80% during the winter months.
- Southeast families served by rural co-ops and other public power utilities spent on average 8% more on electricity than those served by investor-owned utilities in 2012.
- In co-op areas, higher electricity rates, higher electric use due to inefficient housing, and lower average incomes account for the higher burden for residents.
- At most, only 1 out of 8 residents in the Southeast has access to financial support for implementing home energy efficiency improvements.



The burden of high electricity costs reduces the ability of low-income families to pay for food, housing, education, healthcare and other essential needs. Much of this burden is because many homes lack proper insulation, are poorly weatherized and use old, inefficient appliances, resulting in significant energy waste.

Learn more about the [Poverty / Electricity Costs connection here](#).

