Senate Energy & Telecomm.Comm.
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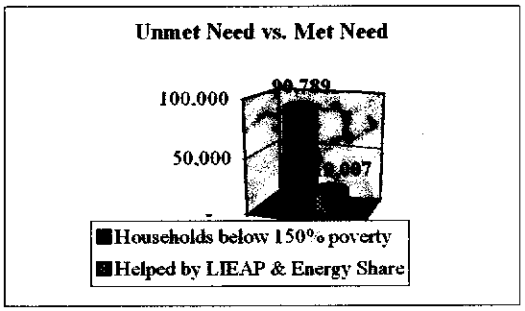
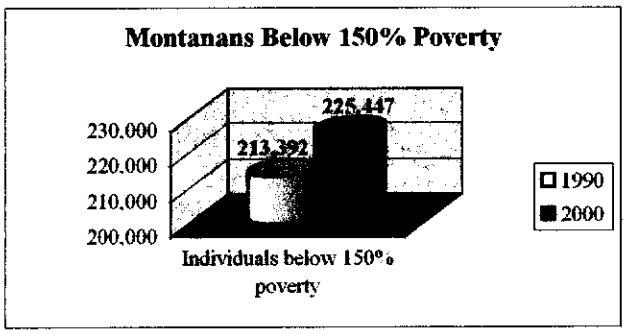
Bill No. SB 34, 307, 365 & SB 371

Fact Sheet on Montana's Poor and the Need for Low-Income Energy Assistance

According to the 2000 census figures there are 90,789 Montana households below 150% of poverty. Between Energy Share and LIEAP, only 21,772 households (20% of those below 150% of poverty) were helped in FY2004.



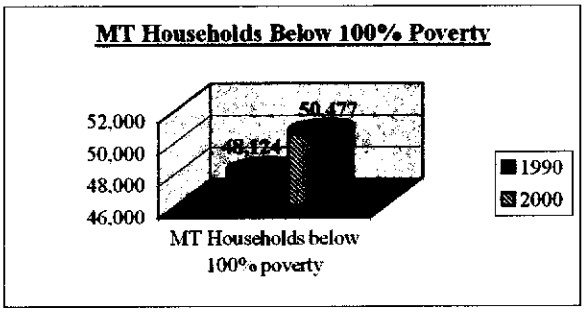
According to the 2000 Census, there are 225,512 children below 18 years of age in Montana. Of those, **42,912 live below the poverty level.** Montana is ranked 38th nationally for the number of poor children – **19% of our children are poor**.



In 1990 Montana's population of individuals who are below 150% of poverty was 213,392. According to the 2000 Census, that number has grown over 12,000 to 225,447.

Looking at a 3-year average for 1999-2001, Montana ranks 42nd among all states for the percentage of population in poverty. According to 2000 census figures, **Montana has the 10th highest poverty rate** among the 50 states.

According to Department of Public Health and Human Services, in fiscal year 2004 the energy burden for LIEAP recipients was 12.8% of their annual income, up from 8.8% in fiscal year 2002. If you take a household that makes a more average income of $30,000 and they had the same energy burden, they would be paying over $3,800 a year or $320 a month for energy costs.



The National Low Income Consortium did a study on how families at or below 125% of poverty coped with energy bills. 46% skipped meals sometimes or often; 45% skipped medications sometimes or often; and 54% used their oven for heat, an inefficient and expensive way to heat a home.

Nationally, 55% of the low-income households that had financial heat interruptions were non-welfare poor households and 69% were households with children. When households experienced a heat interruption, 54% went without heat, 39% heated 1-2 rooms with fireplaces, cooking stoves and/or portable heaters. Cooking stoves, which 1.8 million households reported using to keep warm, are dangerous, expensive and ineffective home heaters.[1]

A study by Boston City Hospital shows that the number of emergency room visits by underweight children increased by 30% after the coldest months of the year, demonstrating the "Heat or Eat" dilemma many families face each winter.[2]

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[1] Low Income Energy Assistance Program: Report to Congress FY 1987. DHHS, pp. 147-148; 152-154.

[2] The New York Times, "Study of Poor Children Shows a Painful Choice: Heat Over Food", Sept 9, 1992.