



EXHIBIT 2  
DATE 3/29/07  
SB 264

March 29, 2007

TO: Chairwoman Arntzen and Members of the House Local Government Committee

FROM: Jackie Boyle, AARP Montana

RE: **Support of SB 264, Low-income rates for local government utilities**

Madame Chair and members of the committee my name is Jackie Boyle representing AARP Montana. AARP is a non-profit, non-partisan membership organization with 154,000 members in Montana. We strongly support SB 264, which allows local government utilities to provide assistance to limited-income people.

SB 264 is especially helpful to seniors. According to Census projections and our own research, we know that 82% of people 65 and older in Montana own their homes. As the cost for health care, energy and other vital services increase for seniors, this proposal could provide critical assistance.

AARP has been a dedicated supporter of the bill assistance programs for energy offered by the federal government and the electric and natural gas providers in the state and are grateful to extend our support to other essential services. Water, sewer and sanitation services are vital to the health and personal welfare of all Montanans. We know a stable bill discount program will have positive results, such as increased payment of the discounted bill, reduction in incidence of termination of service, reduced reliance on repeated payment arrangements, and reduced bad debt or uncollectible expense.

As I mentioned, bill assistance is offered to electric and natural gas customers by both the federal government through the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) and utilities through universal systems benefits (USB). Northwestern Energy operates its USB program by charging all customers a little more (less than \$1 per month) and offering a discount to customers who are already on LIEAP. The Department of Public Health and Human Services forwards to NWE the names of qualifying customers and the utility automatically enrolls them for the discount. Another option for providing a discount is used by the Flathead Electric Cooperative who also charges all customers a little more and then simply asks customers to sign an affidavit that states their income to receive the discount.

Local government utilities could use these models or ones used by other states that request a copy of enrollment in another means tested assistance program, such as food stamps or Medicaid. *See handout of program offered by Columbus, OH utilities.* AARP has shown in membership surveys and polls that people in Montana are willing to pay a little more on utility bills if the money goes to help those who earn less.

I urge your support of SB 264, which allows seniors to age in their homes and stay independent.

**PART I. ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT****TITLE II. EXECUTIVE AND ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS OF THE  
COMMONWEALTH**

Go To:  
[Next Section](#)  
[Previous Section](#)  
[Chapter Table of Contents](#)  
[MGL Search Page](#)  
[General Court Home](#)  
[Mass.gov](#)

**CHAPTER 23B. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT****Chapter 23B: Section 24B. Low-income sewer and water assistance program**

Section 24B. The department shall, subject to appropriation, operate a low-income sewer and water assistance program to provide assistance in paying the sewer and water bills of homeowners earning less than one hundred and fifty percent of the federal poverty level, as defined by the federal government or homeowners who are eligible for one and two household fuel assistance program, so-called. Said program may be administered in coordination with the Low-income Home Energy Assistance Act, 42 United States Code sections 8621 et seq., or any successor acts thereto, subject to the following provisions: shall establish benefit rates and maximum benefits such that total benefits paid do not exceed the amount appropriated for this benefit;

- (a) the department shall use the same grantee agencies, similar applications and similar verification procedures as are used in the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, to the maximum extent possible. The department may also utilize a reasonable percentage of any funds appropriated, not exceeding 10 per cent of such funds, for administrative costs of the program.
- (b) the benefit level provided to any individual household eligible under this program shall not be greater than 25 per cent of the total annual water and sewer bill for the household; provided, however, that the department shall establish benefit rates and maximum benefits such that total benefits paid do not exceed the amount appropriated for this benefit.
- (c) households which receive benefits under this program shall not unreasonably refuse to cooperate with any demand-side water conservation programs which are provided at no expense to the household by any local agency or authority.

City of Columbus - Division of Power and Water  
 Low Income Discount Application Form

**ELIGIBILITY:** To be eligible for the Low Income Discount program, applicants must meet the following Requirements:

- 1) Customer has an active water or sewer account for his or her residence in his or her name (may be in name of spouse).
- 2) Customer is currently enrolled in any of the following low income programs (must include *letter of acceptance* from program listed):
  - a. Food Stamp Benefits
  - b. Ohio Medicaid
  - c. Low Income Energy Assistance (LIHEAP)
  - d. Home Energy Assistance (HEAP)
  - e. Ohio Works First
  - f. Social Security Disability (Reason of disability must be stated on document)
  - g. Public Housing Benefits
  - h. Homestead Exemption

- 1) Customer will receive a fifteen (15) percent discount on water and sewer commodity charges (actual usage)
- 2) Discount will ***not*** include:
  - a) Meter reading fees
  - b) Late charges, interest or other associated charges
- 3) ***Eligibility must be established annually***
  - a) Customer must sign a new application on or before the date of the previous year's application to maintain eligibility
- 4) ***If customer becomes ineligible for the discount***
  - a) Customer will notify the Division of Water as soon as possible, but no later than 30 days of the customer's ineligibility
- 5) ***Falsifying information / failing to notify eligible status change may include:***
  - a) Termination of Water Services
  - b) Recovery of past discounts
  - c) Civil and / or criminal sanctions



NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
Last First Middle

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
Number Street / Road Apartment #  
\_\_\_\_\_ City State Zip Code

TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

ACCOUNT NUMBER (from water bill): \_\_\_\_\_



**Check the appropriate box for the participating Low Income Program:**

- Food Stamp Benefits
- Ohio Medicaid
- Low Income Energy Assistance (LIHEAP)
- Home Energy Assistance (HEAP)
- Ohio Works First
- Social Security Disability
- Public Housing Benefits
- Homestead Exemption

**This application must have attached documentation proving participation in the low income program\* to be mailed to:**

**Public Utilities Department  
Customer Service Center  
910 Dublin Road  
Columbus OH 43215**

*Documents submitted with this application will not be returned*  
*Send copies of documents only*

The information associated with this application has been examined by me, and is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, true, correct and complete.

**APPLICANT'S SIGNATURE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

Prepared by signature (if different from applicant): \_\_\_\_\_