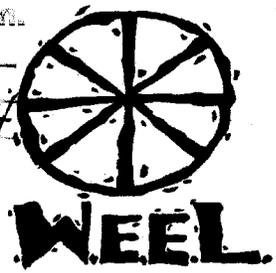


To: Senate Local Government  
From: WEEL – Olivia Riutta – [oriutta@weelempowers.org](mailto:oriutta@weelempowers.org), 406.495.0497  
Date: February 8, 2007  
Re: Senate Bill 264 – Low-Income rates fro local government utilities

SB 264



Madame Chair and members of the committee.

I am a representative of WEEL. We are a state based non-profit organization that is made up of low-income people and those who support us. We provide direct advocacy for our low-income neighbors. I am here today to support SB 264 because it has great potential to support low-income Montanans.

Much like the Low Income Energy Assistance Program, SB 264 would give low-income people a break on necessary services. While utility rate increases may seem small, for some of our members an increase of \$10 per month can stretch the family budget over time. This legislation would also support our population of folks with fixed incomes: senior citizens and the permanently disabled.

WEEL supports this bill because it is a grassroots approach to addressing poverty. It is not a mandate, it is an option. Poverty exists in every county in this state, rural and urban. Local governments are most in tune with what is happening in their neighborhoods and we need to give them the authority to address these issues and work toward change.

Poverty knows not party line. I urge your support for SB 264 and hope that you can stand with me in support of our low-income neighbors.

Thank you,

Olivia Riutta