



THE INTERIM

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IN THIS ISSUE

VOLUNTEERS WANTED FOR "ELECTRONIC DOCUMENTS FOR LEGISLATORS" PILOT PROJECT	1
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL	1
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COUNCIL	2
ENERGY AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE ..	3
HB 49 SUBCOMMITTEE	4
STATE-TRIBAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE	4
CHILDREN, FAMILIES, HEALTH, AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE	5
STATE ADMINISTRATION AND VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE	6
ECONOMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE	7
LEGISLATIVE FINANCE COMMITTEE	8
LAW AND JUSTICE COMMITTEE	8
THE BACK PAGE	11
HOUSING AFFORDABILITY IN MONTANA	11
INTERIM CALENDAR	16

VOLUNTEERS WANTED FOR "ELECTRONIC DOCUMENTS FOR LEGISLATORS" PILOT PROJECT

Tired of all that paper?...In response to interest expressed by legislators last session of moving to a "paperless" Legislature, the Office of Legislative Information Technology has initiated a pilot project to reduce the amount of paper legislators receive during the session. Legislators who volunteer for the pilot project will receive certain 2009 session-related documents electronically. These documents include the initial review of bill draft letter and bill draft (including any subsequent letters and bill drafts or redos), the preintroduction letter, all committee hearing notices (the white slips), and the phone and web messages received by the Legislative Information Office (the yellow and blue messages delivered by the pages). If the pilot project goes well, all legislators could receive these documents electronically during the 2011 session.

To participate in the pilot project, a legislator must be willing to receive all of the relevant documents electronically and must have a regularly maintained email account. Legislators who want to volunteer should contact Steve Eller at seller@mt.gov or (406) 444-3590.

The information technology group is also expanding the information contained on each legislator's webpage. The webpage will contain not only the legislator's committee assignments and associated bills, but also a hearings calendar for each legislator's scheduled bills. Legislators and members of the public will be able to access those pages through the legislative branch website.

(Editor's note: This article ran in the April issue of The Interim, and so far legislator response has been low. Legislators who are interested in this pilot project to reduce the amount of paper received during the session should contact Legislative Services Division.)

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Council begins planning for next session...The Legislative Council met April 1 to plan for legislator orientation next fall, to consider interim committee policies, to begin developing budget initiatives, and to review general fund revenue. The council also continued working on strategic planning topics, including the fiscal note study, annual and even year sessions, and a proposal for changing the way in which session committee minutes are approved.

Proposed 2009 session calendar...The council adopted a tentative calendar for the 2009 legislative session, which has been posted to the legislative branch website. The calendar reflects the recommendations of current legislative leadership, but it may be revised by legislative leadership elected during caucuses next November.

Council reviews potential budget initiatives and legislation...Legislative Services Division staff presented proposed budget initiatives and legislation for the next session. These proposals, which will be reviewed in more detail at the council's June meeting, include the feed bill for the operation of the Legislature; TVMT; the computer

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Montana Legislative Services Division
Room 110, State Capitol
PO Box 201706
Helena, MT 59620-1706
Phone: (406) 444-3064
Fax: (406) 444-3036

THE INTERIM is a monthly newsletter that reports on the interim activities of legislative committees, including the Legislative Council, the Environmental Quality Council, the Legislative Finance Committee, the Legislative Audit Committee, and interim legislative committees and subcommittees staffed by the Legislative Services Division. Information about the committees, including meeting schedules, agendas, and reports, is found at <http://www.leg.mt.gov>. Follow the "Committees" link or the "Interims" link to the relevant committee. The newsletter is posted on the legislative branch website on the first of each month (follow the "Publications" link).

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system plan and information technology; funding for interstate organizations, including the Pacific Northwest Economic Region, the Legislative Council on River Governance, the National Conference of State Legislatures, and the Council of State Governments; districting and apportionment; and interim committee budgets. Proposed legislation may include the code commissioner bill, the feed bill, changing the operation of interim committees, revising the deadline for submitting the legislative budget, and reviving the fiscal note legislation that died last session.

Proposal to change approval of standing committee minutes...The council approved a proposal to provide a business report for standing committee presiding officers to sign in lieu of signing the written committee minutes. Because standing committees keep audio minutes, the written minutes reflect only a log of the audio recording of committee meetings. The use of the business report will allow the presiding officer to certify which bills and resolutions were heard during a committee meeting and any executive action taken. Committee secretaries will complete the written log and submit it directly for posting to the website. The audio recording is posted soon after a meeting and this change will allow the written log of the minutes to be posted more quickly for public access. The proposal requires a minor change to the House rules. The Rules Committee will consider the proposal in December which may then be sent to the House of Representatives in January 2009.

Brochure on administrative rules...In response to the council's concerns about the delegation of legislative authority through administrative rules, Susan Fox and Gayle Shirley prepared a brochure on administrative rules to guide legislators. The brochure will be posted on the legislative website and sent to all legislators when bill drafting begins later this year. In addition, procedures, including notification in the letter to a legislator for review of a bill draft, will be established that will assist staff in informing a legislator that a bill either grants or extends rulemaking authority to a state agency.

Brochures for legislators and the public...The Legislative Information Office is developing two series of brochures, one specifically for legislators and one for the public. The first legislator brochure is entitled "From Idea to Introduction: A Guide for Legislators on Requesting and Sponsoring Bills." It has been sent to all holdover senators and unopposed senators and representatives and will be sent to the successful candidates following the primary and general elections. The brochure explains the drafting and sponsoring of a bill, types of legislation, bill draft deadlines, how to request bill drafts, how the drafting of bills is prioritized, and achieving policy goals.

The first brochure for the public is an update of the brochure "Having Your Say: How to Testify Effectively Before a Legislative Committee." All brochures will be posted to the legislative branch website and are available upon request at the Legislative Services Division in the Reference Center and Legislative Information Office, or by contacting Gayle

Shirley, legislative information officer, at (406) 444-2957 or gshirley@mt.gov.

Next council meeting in June...The Legislative Council will meet sometime in June. The council will continue its work on budget initiatives and planning for the next legislative session. The council's chair and vice chair plan to meet early in June with their counterparts of the Legislative Finance Committee and the Legislative Audit Committee to review administrative and management responsibilities.

For more information, visit the Legislative Council's webpage or contact Susan Byorth Fox at sfox@mt.gov or (406) 444-3066.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COUNCIL

Meeting in May...The Environmental Quality Council meets May 12 and 13 in Room 102 of the state Capitol. Council members will examine 15 recommendations aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions in Montana and will begin wrapping up a study of conservation easements on state trust lands.

Council to focus on selected climate change recommendations...At its March meeting, the EQC requested additional information on 15 of the 54 recommendations included in the "Montana Climate Change Action Plan: Final Report of the Governor's Climate Change Advisory Committee." The report, released in November 2007, was the subject of a survey conducted by the EQC in February. Based on the survey results, EQC members selected 15 of the 54 overall recommendations for further review. However, members noted that by selecting those 15, they were not endorsing those specific recommendations or dismissing the other recommendations.

An analysis of the 15 recommendations is posted on the EQC website. The analysis includes conservation considerations related to the recommendations, current efforts underway related to the recommendations, and potential legislation that could be considered to implement the recommendations. A number of agencies chose to comment on the analysis, and those comments are also included online.

Council members will discuss the analysis and decide if they wish to pursue related draft legislation or recommendations and findings on the subject of climate change.

Conservation easement study...In March the EQC reviewed a proposed brochure that explains the basics of conservation easements. The EQC directed staff to draft proposed findings for the HJ57 study and a preliminary report that will be presented at the upcoming meeting.

The Land Board currently has several legal options when it comes to state trust land and conservation tools, according to a legal opinion by EQC attorney Todd Everts, who drafted the opinion as part of the council's conservation

easement study. The study directs the EQC to examine options for establishing conservation easements on trust lands.

Among other things, Everts concluded the board has the authority to:

- sell an estate or interest in state trust lands. This interest could include--and has been included in some of the board's past transactions--the sale of development rights. This authority includes the ability to sell or retain an estate or interest in perpetuity.
- retain an estate or interest in state trust lands. This interest could include--and has been included in some of the board's past transactions--the retention of development rights.
- grant an easement for "conservation purposes" (undefined in statute) pursuant to 77-2-101(1)(e), MCA. The board also has the authority to grant an easement for "other public uses" under 77-2-101(1)(f).
- grant easements on state trust lands for natural areas under the Montana Natural Areas Act of 1974.
- accept gifts or donations of land or other property and is obligated to manage the land for the benefit of the specific purposes designated by the person gifting the property. This could include conservation restrictions on the property.
- lease trust lands for up to 99 years under 77-1-204, MCA, for uses that could include--and has been included in some of the board's past transactions--conservation uses.

Review of state water plan...The EQC will hear an overview and update on the state water plan from the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, the agency charged with developing the plan. Much of the current plan was adopted more than a decade ago. According to 85-1-203, MCA: "The state water plan must set out a progressive program for the conservation, development, and utilization of the state's water resources and propose the most effective means by which these water resources may be applied for the benefit of the people, with due consideration of alternative uses and combinations of uses."

Agency oversight...The departments of Environmental Quality and Agriculture will present compliance and enforcement reports to the Agency Oversight Subcommittee.

Staff contacts... For more information about the Environmental Quality Council, contact Todd Everts at teverts@mt.gov or (406) 444-3747, Joe Kolman, at jkolman@mt.gov or (406) 444-9280, or Sonja Nowakowski,

at snowakowski@mt.gov or (406) 444.3078. The agenda and other materials are available at www.leg.mt.gov/eqc.

ENERGY AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

Carbon sequestration, telecommunications panel, and other topics scheduled for two-day meeting...Carbon sequestration and a telecommunications panel top the agenda of an upcoming two-day meeting of the Energy and Telecommunications Interim Committee. The committee, which last met in January, meets Thursday and Friday, May 1 and 2 in Room 172 of the Capitol.

Members are expected to close in on recommendations or potential legislation concerning carbon sequestration. They also will vote on proposed draft legislation that removes the sunset from the existing Universal Services Benefits program.

The telecommunications panel planned for Thursday afternoon includes representatives of the Montana Telecommunications Association and Montana Independent Telecommunications Systems. Representatives of Qwest, Vision Net, Cellular One, Verizon, and Bresnan also have been invited.

ETIC members will hear from Becky Berger, Montana's 9-1-1 Program Manager. The 9-1-1 Advisory Council provides representatives of 9-1-1 jurisdictions with the opportunity to participate in the management of the state's 9-1-1 program, specified in 10-4-102(2), MCA. The council wraps up its work in April.

Presentations on clean coal technologies, Pick-Sloan project power, hydrogen development and demand-side management are on the ETIC's agenda. The committee will continue its public power discussion and learn about a wind integration study recently completed in NorthWestern Energy's service area. Representatives of Montana Public Power, Inc., and representatives of the city of Troy's Municipal Electric Utility, Montana's only municipal electric utility, will discuss public power.

The Public Service Commission and Department of Commerce Energy Infrastructure Promotion and Development Division will provide administrative updates.

Agenda and other information available online...A meeting agenda and additional information on the ETIC and its studies can be found at: www.leg.mt.gov/etic. For more information contact Sonja Nowakowski at snowakowski@mt.gov or (406) 444-3078.

HB 49 SUBCOMMITTEE

Subcommittee to decide on special purpose districts at May meeting...Does Montana need uniform provisions to govern the creation and operation of special districts like cemetery, water, sewer, and mosquito control? A lack of

uniformity creates confusion and disparities, according to the last Legislature, which asked the HB 49 subcommittee to study special districts this interim.

The subcommittee, appointed by the Education and Local Government Interim Committee, will decide whether to move forward with a uniform act at its next meeting, May 29 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. in Room 152 of the Capitol. Committee members are Sen. Kim Gillan, chair; Rep. Gary Branae, vice chair; Sen. Rick Laible; Rep. Bill Nooney; Mike McGinley, Beaverhead county commissioner; Paula Robinson, Flathead County clerk and recorder; Paulette DeHart, Lewis and Clark County clerk and recorder/treasurer; Shoots Veis, Billings city councilman; Ed Meece, Livingston city manager; and Marty Rehbein, Missoula city clerk.

Not all special districts would fall under the proposed uniform provisions. Those that may be included are: cemetery districts, county museums, facilities for the arts, museum districts, county parks districts, county water and sewer districts, fair commissions, fair districts and multi-county fair districts, hospital districts, local improvement districts, local water quality districts, metropolitan sanitary and storm sewer districts, mosquito control districts, multijurisdictional service districts, road improvement districts, rodent control districts, rural fire districts, solid waste management districts, television districts, and urban transportation districts.

If the Legislature enacted uniform provisions, they would apply to districts created after enactment, while existing special districts could continue to operate under statutes now in effect.

For more information on the HB 49 subcommittee and special districts, contact Hope Stockwell, subcommittee staff, at (406) 444-1640 or hstockwell@mt.gov. Meeting agendas and reports are on the Education and Local Government Committee website at www.leg.mt.gov/elgic.

STATE-TRIBAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Historic visit to Little Shell Tribe...The State-Tribal Relations Interim Committee made its first government-to-government visit to the Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa as part of its April 19 meeting in Great Falls. Little Shell Tribal President John Sinclair invited the committee to meet with tribal council members and to have the Saturday meeting at the Little Shell Tribal Offices.

The committee went to the Morony Dam townsite to followup on HB 284, enacted in the 2007 session. The legislation authorized Fish, Wildlife, and Parks to enter into an agreement with the Little Shell Tribe regarding renovation of an apartment building at the townsite for use as offices, interpretative areas, and cultural and recreational activities. The 7-acre townsite is part of the Giant Springs state park. As committee members traipsed through the apartment building with cotton booties covering their shoes and face masks covering noses and mouths, they observed damage from vandals and bat guano (but luckily didn't see bats or

mice). The committee asked the tribe to suggest legislation, if any is needed, at the committee's June 23 meeting. Gary Bertellotti, the regional FWP manager, provided information on previously estimated costs for renovating the building (more than \$500,000 in 2003) and reiterated FWP's availability to continue working with the tribe on the next steps for determining use of the site.

Efforts to treat methamphetamine addiction...The Department of Corrections, several tribes, and the Montana Wyoming Tribal Leaders Council discussed their approaches to treating people addicted to methamphetamine. Rick Deady, from DOC, outlined the programs offered at the Elkhorn Treatment Center in Boulder for female offenders and at the NEXUS Methamphetamine Treatment Center in Lewistown for male offenders. Deady said that nearly 26% of the women at the Elkhorn facility were Indians and 15% of men at NEXUS were Indians. Both facilities offer certain elements of Indian spiritual culture, some more frequently than others.

Rep. Jonathan Windy Boy, a member of the committee as well as a Rocky Boy tribal council member, described his efforts to coordinate a statewide tribal initiative intended to serve as a demonstration project for tribal implementation of federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) grants. Both Windy Boy and Toni Plummer Alvernaz, also of the Rocky Boy's Reservation, outlined concerns regarding lack of: tribal representation in the state's competitive SAMHSA grant review process, a working relationship with the state on grant-related budgets, and identifiable performance measures used to determine effectiveness of SAMHSA grants, to name a few. They also posed questions about how the Access to Recovery grant is providing assistance on reservations. A member of the Blackfeet Nation joined Kermit Horn of the Fort Belknap Tribal Council in support of Windy Boy's efforts and described her concerns about the lack of treatment or other assistance on reservations for adolescents involved in substance abuse. The committee reviewed information on the 3-year Access to Recovery grant, which is intended to provide local services through vouchers for clinical treatment and recovery support.

In other action...Russell Boham, one of the Little Shell hosts, asked the committee about the significance of state recognition of the Little Shell Tribe. The committee will provide an explanation and an opinion on whether statutory recognition is appropriate or needed. The Little Shell Tribe has state recognition but is awaiting federal recognition, which would provide financial benefits that it does not now have.

Next reservation visit planned for June...The committee will meet June 23 at the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribal Offices in Pablo. The committee will discuss domestic violence and substance abuse on reservations. For more information about the April 19 meeting or future meetings, contact Pat Murdo, committee staff, at (406) 444-3064 or visit the committee website.

CHILDREN, FAMILIES, HEALTH, AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

Subcommittee advances economic credentialing bill...At its March meeting, the SJR 15 subcommittee studying health care access and delivery reviewed different versions of a bill draft to clarify the limits under which hospitals can deny privileges to physicians who have an investment in a competing health care facility. In the bill draft (LC38), the subcommittee has made changes to the economic credentialing statute enacted in 2007 and proposed new disclosure and referral requirements.

The bill would also require all health care providers who make referrals to tell their patients if they have a potential economic conflict of interest through investment or employment and what other health care providers may be available to the patient. The bill draft is being refined and will be presented to the committee in June. Both the subcommittee and the Children, Families, Health, and Human Services Committee are dealing with access and delivery from the perspective of providing consumers with more responsibility and more information about their health care choices.

The full committee also heard from several speakers on policies under consideration as part of the SJR 15 study, including ways to share and update patient health records through a computerized system; the work that school nurses do in early intervention for childhood mental and physical health problems; an overview of hospice and the state's registry for end-of-life directives; and community benefits--such as charity care and community education--provided by nonprofit hospitals.

Potential EMS solutions discussed...After hearing a from stakeholders in March, committee members began focusing on potential legislative solutions for the SJR 5 study of emergency medical services. Ideas include:

- Incentives to increase recruitment and retention of volunteer emergency medical technicians, including tax credits or deductions for both EMTs and employers who allow their employees time off to respond to emergency calls.
- Statutory or rule changes that would allow ambulance services to operate with one EMT and a driver and that would allow EMTs the ability to provide care within hospital emergency rooms.
- Review of Medicaid reimbursement rates and related matters.
- A grant program for EMS providers.

Speakers at the March meeting proposed additional ideas for the committee. Debbie Ogden of the Missoula EMS Council asked that state laws be changed to provide confidentiality for quality reviews of EMS calls, so the discussions could not be used in lawsuits. Ogden said EMS

medical directors are reluctant to participate in case reviews without a guarantee of confidentiality, and she stressed that such reviews are necessary to improve future responses by all EMS providers.

Cliff Christian, of the American Heart Association and the American Stroke Association, emphasized the importance of early response to medical emergencies in the successful treatment of heart attacks and strokes. He said the groups believe incentives are necessary to recruit and retain volunteer EMTs, adding that incentives could be funded from sources such as the tobacco tax, an earmarked 9-1-1 tax, or a fee on all Montana health insurance policies.

Ken Threet, speaking from his personal perspective as an EMT, said emergency services need to be viewed as part of the health care delivery system of every community. He suggested creating a grant program for EMS providers, funded by a fee on vehicle registrations.

The committee will review additional information on many of these ideas at its June 11 meeting, as well as a performance audit of EMS conducted by the Legislative Audit Division.

Mental health study gets underway...Committee members got a first look at the plan for conducting the mental health study funded by the 2007 Legislature, with a presentation by Richard Dougherty of DMA Health Strategies. Dougherty's firm won the contract for conducting a study to identify gaps in current mental health services and potential new funding sources.

Dougherty's presentation was part of a three-day site visit that DMA made to Montana in March to begin talking with state officials and mental health consumers, providers, and advocates.

Dougherty outlined the 12 study questions DMA will be posing as part of the study. The questions are divided into three areas that are designed to:

- identify existing services, needs, and gaps;
- quantify current funding and identify potential funding options; and
- determine the best options for providing and funding mental health services for adults and children who are in the justice system.

DPHHS acts on other mental health areas...Joyce DeCunzo, head of the Addictive and Mental Disorders Division of the Department of Public Health and Human Services, reviewed activities that are underway to reduce the number of patients at the Montana State Hospital in Warm Springs. DeCunzo said DPHHS has established contracts with community-based mental health providers for intensive services in an effort to move people out of the hospital and into the community. The division plans to establish 65 community slots for people who are leaving the state hospital.

DPHHS is taking action to reduce the State Hospital's census to its licensed capacity of 189 patients; the number of patients has consistently been higher than that.

DeCunzo also said the division is continuing its efforts to recruit four new psychiatrists at the State Hospital. The psychiatrists would not only serve patients at the hospital, but would also be available for round-the-clock telepsychiatry services as part of the 72-hour presumptive eligibility program funded by the 2007 Legislature. Under this program, the state will pay for the first 72 hours of crisis stabilization services that a mentally ill person receives, if the person has no other way to pay for the services.

The program started March 1 in Custer, Gallatin, Lewis and Clark, Missoula, Ravalli, Silver Bow, and Yellowstone counties. Additional counties are to be added to the program in July, and the program is expected to be in place statewide by October.

DeCunzo also said new funding provided for mental health drop-in centers will allow continued operation of a program in Billings and the addition of services in Bozeman, Miles City, and Livingston by July 1. The Montana Mental Health Association also will provide a statewide telephone and Internet-based "center" on evenings and Saturday afternoons.

Other DPHHS activities...DPHHS Director Joan Miles discussed changes in the administration of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), saying the state has saved money by switching from purchasing a fully insured program to paying the claims itself. In making the change, the state assumed the risk of having to pay for any high-cost health claims, but Miles says the program had not yet experienced any such claims.

Miles also described how 10 area agencies on aging have used the \$3 million in one-time funds that the 2007 Legislature appropriated for programs for the elderly. DPHHS distributed the money to the individual agencies, which in turn have used the money in ways that best meet the needs of residents in their region, she said.

Deputy Director John Chappuis provided the committee with a written report on how various divisions are putting a wage increase for direct care workers into effect. The 2007 Legislature provided funds for the increase.

Access to health care causes concerns...Committee members discussed their concerns about the effects of Medicare payment rates and insurance decisions on the ability of Montanans to access health care, particularly primary care physicians such as family doctors and internists. They noted that Congress is considering a 10% reduction to Medicare reimbursement rates for physicians. Rep. Edith Clark also discussed a situation in which 3,000 Great Falls-area residents may be affected by an insurance company decision to remove just one primary care physician from one of the company's provider networks.

Committee members agreed to send a letter asking the Montana congressional delegation to oppose the proposed Medicare reductions and asked that a panel presentation on health-care access issues be included on the agenda for their June 11 meeting.

Next meeting in June...The committee will meet June

11 in Room 137 of the Capitol, beginning at 8 a.m. with a meeting of the SJR 15 subcommittee. The meeting of the full committee will begin at 10 a.m.

The agenda and other materials will be posted on the committee's website, www.leg.mt.gov/cfhhs, as they become available. Please contact Sue O'Connell at (406) 444-3597 or soconnell@mt.gov for more information about committee activities.

STATE ADMINISTRATION AND VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Committee reviews retirement system proposals...

The State Administration and Veterans' Affairs Committee met April 28. The primary purpose of the meeting was to review changes to the state's public employee retirement systems that may be proposed by various stakeholders, including:

- Competitive compensation and adequate funding of the Montana university system optional retirement program, MEA-MFT;
- Attracting and retaining a quality K-12 educational workforce "Professional Retirement Option", MEA-MFT;
- Allow members who initially chose not to enroll in the guaranteed annual benefit adjustment a second, one-time option to enroll in GABA, Montana State Firemen's Association;
- Add a partial lump sum option payment to the Firefighters' Retirement system, Montana State Firemen's Association;
- Allow for the expansion of employers and firefighters who can join the Firefighters' Retirement System, Montana State Firemen's Association;
- Make all retirement systems equal when defining compensation for purposes of retirement, Montana State Firemen's Association;
- Raise the multiplier for years of service from the current 2.5% to 3%, Montana State Firemen's Association;
- Return the GABA to 3% for new hires, Association of Montana Retired Public Employees;
- Allow union dues to be withheld from monthly retirement benefits of highway patrol retirees, Association of Montana Troopers;
- Change the definition of "compensation" in 19-9-104, MCA, to be the same as in other retirement

systems, Montana Police Protective Association;

- Eliminate the 9% employee contribution to MPORS for retired members participating in the DROP, Montana Police Protective Association; and
- Include public safety dispatchers in one of the 20-year retirement systems for public safety employees, Association of Public-Safety Communication Officials-International.

The Public Employees' Retirement Board and the Teachers' Retirement Board will offer their respective proposed changes to the retirement systems at the committee's June 30 meeting.

Continuing the HJR 59 study of state retirement systems, the committee heard a staff report on "Money Purchase Retirement Plans", a subcategory of defined contribution retirement plans.

HJR 46 election study results in bill drafts...In February, the committee approved two election-related bill drafts that resulted from the HJR 46 study of election laws and also decided on the elements to include in a bill draft authorizing a pilot project for expanded use of mail ballot elections. The committee approved:

- LC9050, a bill to revise and clarify current election laws to clean up inconsistencies that have occurred over the years as lawmakers have changed laws relating to absentee and mail voting and to voter registration. The bill will continue through the process as LC 35.
- LC9060, a bill to authorize the use of youth election judges. Currently, election judges must be registered voters. This bill, which will continue through the process as LC 36, would allow youth who are 16 or 17 years old to serve as poll workers.

Both bills were developed over several months with the assistance of a work group of people involved and interested in the elections process.

The committee also made several decisions in February relating to a mail ballot pilot project--LC 60--that members authorized at the November 2007 meeting. The project would allow selected counties to conduct all elections--including elections for congressional, statewide, and legislative offices--by mail. The committee decided the pilot project should involve elections held in 2009 and 2010 and should include approximately 12 counties representing all areas of the state and providing a balance among urban, rural, and tribal communities. Participating counties will be required to hold any election conducted by the county election administrator as a mail ballot election. In addition, the participating counties will be required to collect specific information to allow future legislatures to determine the effects that the mail ballot elections had on voter turnout, registration, and access and whether mail delivery issues affected the voting process.

Finally with respect to election laws, the committee authorized staff to draft LC 59 to allow an absentee voter to request a new ballot if a candidate dies between the time the voter received the absentee ballot and election day, the ballot is changed, and the absentee voter has voted.

Proposal to exempt military retirement income...In response to a proposal submitted by Rep. Pat Ingraham, the committee authorized staff to draft LC 90 to exempt military pension income from state income tax. The bill draft will initially be similar to HB 824 from the 2007 regular session.

Two-day meeting planned...The next committee meeting is scheduled for June 30 and July 1. The primary agenda items for that meeting will be legislative proposals from the Public Employees' and Teachers' Retirement Boards, the Board of Investments, the Secretary of State, the Commissioner of Political Practices, and the Departments of Administration and Military Affairs. Other issues, unknown at this time, will fill out the remainder of the agenda.

The tentative agenda for the meeting will be posted on the committee's webpage when approved by the presiding officer and will be updated as the meeting date approaches.

For more information about the committee contact Dave Bohyer, committee staff at dbohyer@mt.gov or (406) 444-3064, or Rep. Franke Wilmer, committee chair, at (406) 599-3639.

ECONOMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Committee travels to Missoula for research study...The Economic Affairs Interim Committee will meet May 7 at the University of Montana in Missoula to take up the HJR 39 study. The study, requested by Rep. Ron Erickson, directs the committee to analyze high-tech and scientific research within the Montana university system and to assess the effects of that research on economic development. While the responsibility of a college faculty member is the education of students, professors say that responsibility extends far beyond the classroom. Research faculty in all disciplines oversee what is in essence a small business, their employees being graduate students, and increasingly many undergraduates, who develop the backbone of data and survey results needed for scientific discovery. The committee will hear from the study's sponsor and backers, university officials, faculty, and students (undergraduate, graduate, and post-doctoral), as well as members of the local business community who will discuss the commercialization of this research. The public is encouraged to attend. The meeting agenda can be found at www.leg.mt.gov/eaic.

HJR 48 Study on Health Insurance Reform...On May 8, the committee will consider options for reforming health insurance in Montana on a limited scale, including whether to revise current laws regarding the mandates on individual policies, the limits on the Insure Montana program, and the

interaction of the Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance program. Other proposals before the committee may include whether to establish a health policy commission with benchmarks for reforming health care coverage.

SJR 13 Study on Value-Added Agriculture... Also on May 8, Brian Gion of the Montana Cooperative Development Center will describe the use of the cooperative model for agricultural and other activities and will contrast Montana's model with that of North Dakota. Jessica Babcock, a University of Montana student studying value-added agriculture, will report on her research of food innovation centers in other states, as a way for the committee to determine whether other states' best practices could be implemented in Montana. Following these presentations, the committee will go to the Mission Mountain Food Enterprise Center in Ronan. The center provides business owners, directly or through contracted services with facilities that undergo U.S. Department of Agriculture inspections and meet Food and Drug Administration, standards for conventional packaging and processing.

For more information about the Economic Affairs Committee, contact Andrew Geiger at (406) 444-5367 or angeiger@mt.gov.

LEGISLATIVE FINANCE COMMITTEE

LFD staff attends performance measurement training ...Can state leaders really drive the performance of state agencies? This was the key question raised at the John F. Kennedy School of Government executive education class entitled "Driving Government Performance: Leadership Strategies for Results." Barb Smith and Kris Wilkinson of the Legislative Fiscal Division joined government managers from around the world in a week-long intensive class to answer that question. Staff will be able to apply the theories and principles learned to the Legislative Finance Committee's performance measurement initiative.

With access to the appropriate information, the governor and the Legislature can drive performance by adopting and implementing appropriate policies and by appropriating the financial resources to achieve those policies. The key elements for success are selecting areas of interest, using a system to provide routine progress reports, and developing strategies for sustained or increased performance as the results of performance measurements become available. It is an on-going process to ensure that the story the data tells is the story the Legislature intended when the policies and appropriations were made. It takes an investment from all parties.

During the training sessions, both staffers worked with a team to analyze situations where performance was poor and where performance was excellent whereby sustainability became the issue. Through piles of reading, group work, and classroom interaction, this practical approach was put to the test. The approach was seasoned

with current practices from other forms of government to add reality. The task required determining what data was missing, who needed to have the data, and how outcomes would have changed.

The training has enabled staffers to review the current performance initiative system and look for opportunities to ratchet up performance. Two key factors were recognized. First, we need to continually ensure that appropriate data is available to provide the basis for telling the story. Second, we need to increase awareness of how performance initiatives work and where the Legislature can use the information to decide whether the stories told by the programs are the stories the Legislature needs to hear.

For example, if the Legislature adopts policies and provides the funding for safe highways, what story should be told about highways? Should it be: Montana highway deaths were reduced by 25 percent during the 2009 biennium? Or, more specifically, should it be that fatalities resulting from deer-car collisions were reduced by 25 percent by setting specific hunting district quotas. In essence, to drive performance, policies, budgets, and expectations need to be clear in order to hear that same story later. And if that story is not told, what story does the data tell and why and how can parties work together to improve performance?

Can state leaders really drive performance? Yes, performance can be driven by applying management principles, accessing the data and telling the tale of outcomes. To hear more tales of their classroom experience or just to chat about performance management in general, contact Barb Smith at (406) 444-5347 or basmith@mt.gov or Kris Wilkinson at (406) 444-5834 or kwilkinson@mt.gov.

LAW AND JUSTICE COMMITTEE

Highlights of activity on several fronts... During its April 10-11 meeting, the Law and Justice Interim Committee decided to move forward on several fronts, including:

- development of an in-state residential psychiatric treatment alternative for youth now placed out-of-state, including revisions to youth commitment statutes;
- sharing county costs for adult mental health precommitment detention, evaluation, treatment, and transportation; and revising adult mental health commitment statutes, especially with respect to voluntary commitments; and
- gathering more information about whether to statutorily establish prison and jail standards for the handling inmates with a mental illness.

In-state residential psychiatric treatment for youth ... Steve Gibson, administrator of the Youth Services Division, Department of Corrections, reported on the number of justice-involved youth placed out-of-state for treatment for

serious mental illness, including bipolar disorder, depressive disorders, or psychotic disorders. Gibson discussed the need for an in-state residential treatment facility that could serve about 18 youth in a secure setting. He estimated an operational cost of about \$2 million for the facility, not including the building. Gibson said the state was already spending about \$2 million annually from the state general fund for about 18 justice-involved youth in out-of-state treatment facilities.

Mary Dalton, administrator of the Health Resources Division, Department of Public Health and Human Services, said that in fiscal year 2007, 187 youth were placed in out-of-state residential psychiatric treatment facilities, 26 of whom were Department of Corrections placements. Dalton said Medicaid eligibility is determined on the basis of behavior and treatment needs, rather than on a specific diagnosis. She explained some of the complexities involved in determining whether a facility is medicaid eligible, which include, among other things, determining whether the treatment provided is for a mental disorder, whether the youth receiving treatment meet the income eligibility criteria, whether the mental health treatment is medically necessary, and whether there is a reasonable expectation that the youth will improve.

Lois Menzies, Montana Supreme Court administrator, reported that of the approximately 7,000 youth referred to youth court in fiscal year 2007, 32 were placed in residential psychiatric treatment facilities, and half of those were placed out-of-state. Menzies explained that youth may be placed out-of-state if: there are no in-state beds available; the in-state facilities cannot provide the necessary treatment; or in-state facilities decline to accept the youth because of risks to the safety of the youth, the staff, or other residents.

The committee directed staff to continue to work with the Children's Systems of Care Planning Committee, which has appointed a subcommittee to develop recommendations for consideration by the committee at its next meeting. The SOC is a statutory committee under DPHHS that is responsible for developing policies that support the development of "an in-state quality array of core services in order to assist in returning high-risk children with multiagency service needs from out-of-state placements, limiting and preventing the placement of high-risk children with multiagency service needs out of state, and maintaining high-risk children with multiagency service needs within the least restrictive and most appropriate setting" (52-2-304, MCA).

Involuntary commitment process and costs...

Committee staff summarized the results of a survey sent to each county attorney in Montana. The survey asked for information about the number of involuntary commitment

petitions filed, county detention, examination, treatment, testimony, and transportation costs, and what facilities, other than the Montana State Hospital, the county uses for precommitment detention, examination, and treatment.

The Montana Association of Counties and the Montana County Attorney's Association discussed the need for the state to partner with counties to help pay for unpredictable and significant precommitment costs. Leo Gallagher, Louis and Clark county attorney, presented a proposal for a statewide insurance pool or contingency fund that would help participating counties cover precommitment costs. County mental health mill levies, a new statewide mental health levy, or an increase in state beer and wine taxes were discussed as possible funding sources.

Dr. Laura Wendlandt, psychologist and mental health consultant for the Office of Public Defender, suggested changes to the statutory definition of a "professional person" to increase the number of people who could conduct a mental health examination in commitment proceedings.

Ed Amberg, administrator of the Montana State Hospital, recommended that Montana's involuntary commitment laws be overhauled, not just adjusted, particularly with respect to voluntary commitments. He also suggested shortening the commitment period from 90 days to 21 days. Amberg supported the pooling of costs for smaller counties and suggested that the venue for all commitment proceedings be moved to the local judicial district (i.e., the 3rd Judicial District).

During its work session, the committee directed staff to work with stakeholders to:

- develop options for how the counties and the state can share precommitment costs;
- prepare a discussion bill draft to enhance local crisis intervention services; and
- prepare a discussion bill draft amending adult mental health commitment statutes, particularly with respect to voluntary commitments.

The Committee also asked that transportation to the state hospital be placed on the agenda for the next meeting so the committee can consider the feasibility of a contracted transportation service based at the state hospital.

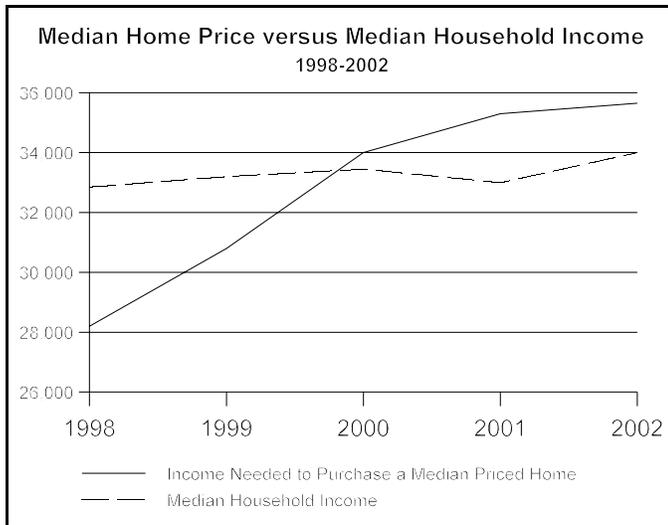
Next meeting date and further information...The committee's next meeting will be June 26 and 27 at the Capitol. For more information contact Sheri Heffelfinger at (406) 444-3596 or visit the committee's website at www.leg.mt.gov/ljic.

THE BACK PAGE

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY IN MONTANA

By Maureen Theisen
Legislative Environmental Policy Office

The rate of homeownership in Montana has been at about 70% since 2000, 4% above the national average.¹ However, Montanans are also paying an increasing portion of their incomes for their homes—in some areas, twice as much as 10 years ago. In addition, the kinds of homes that shelter some populations are deteriorating or lacking. Statewide, housing is becoming less available and less affordable. The following graph shows the change in affordability from 1998 to 2002. More current trends for urban, high-growth areas are discussed below.



Economic and Demographic Analysis in Montana, MSU Billings, Center for Applied Economic Research, December 2003. Recreation of graph, p.10.

BETWEEN THE MARGINS

The difficulty in securing homes or rentals in destination counties, Flathead, Gallatin, Madison, Ravalli, and Missoula, among them, is a common affordable housing lament. As illustrated in the table below, from 2000 to 2006, the cost of houses in some counties jumped more than 60% and, according to county officials, kept increasing into 2007. Missoula’s Office of Planning and Grants tags the median home price in that city at nearly \$220,000,² and the median home price in Flathead County has hit \$240,000.³ In Madison County, housing availability is a problem since the limited housing is being purchased by affluent summer

residents, and what’s left for year-round residents is substandard housing and winter rentals.⁴

Flathead County	1999 ⁵	2006 ⁶
Median House Price	\$125,600	\$204,300
Household Income	\$34,466	\$45,920
Income Needed ⁷	\$37,680	\$61,290
Gallatin County		
Median House Price	\$143,000	\$261,900
Household Income	\$38,120	\$47,532
Income Needed	\$42,900	\$78,570
Missoula County		
Median House Price	\$136,500	\$210,200
Household Income	\$34,454	\$38,168
Income Needed	\$40,950	\$63,060

EAST AND WEST

Richland and Mineral Counties lie on the far eastern and western edges of Montana, respectively. Richland County is expansive, pastoral, and dry. Its traditional industries are ranching and oil development, and its population is concentrated in Sidney, the county seat. The low-income population is adequately served by the programs of the Richland County Housing Authority, but teachers, nurses, police officers, skilled workers, and agricultural workers can’t afford the \$220,000 "spec" homes being built in the area.⁸ Richland County lacks affordable housing for this population.

Mineral County is mountainous, forested, and wet. Its small towns are mostly situated along the I-90 corridor, and its traditional industries are logging and mining. In 2000, about 30% of the population of Mineral County lived in mobile homes, the highest percentage in the state.⁹ About a third of

⁴ Barbie Durham, County Grant Coordinator/Administrator, Email, April 11, 2008.

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey. Data is only available for communities with populations above 65,000.

⁷ Income needed is calculated by multiplying the median cost of a house by 30%, the federal government and banking standard to determine an affordable mortgage.

⁸ Paul Groshart, Richland County Housing Authority, Email, March 24, 2008.

⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

² Mike Barton, Email, April 18, 2008.

³ Hungry Horse News, February 7, 2008.

those homes were manufactured before 1976¹⁰, a fact that increases their likelihood of igniting or falling apart. Mineral County lacks safe, affordable housing for this population.

MOBILE HOMES—A SOLUTION AND A PROBLEM

Mobile homes are often the least expensive housing and provide shelter to the lowest-income populations. In 2000, mobile homes comprised over 20% of the housing in 12 of Montana's 56 counties.¹¹ The risks to this population are generally threefold: loss of mobile home park land to higher-end development, the deteriorating condition and hazards of older trailers, and the inability of owners to receive financial assistance and loans for nonpermanent structures.

Whitefish and Bozeman are two communities with critical affordable housing shortages that are losing mobile home parks to more upscale development. According to the executive director of the Whitefish Housing Authority, Whitefish lost over 130 affordable homes in 2006, 62 of them trailers.¹² Mobile home owners displaced from leased spaces have limited opportunities to relocate in Whitefish because of the high cost of land and a city ordinance that allows only Class A trailers to be sited within the community.¹³ Bridger View trailer park at the north end of Bozeman will be replaced by a portion of the extensive Story Mill development, and a gas station will be built at the former Korner Kourt trailer park site at Four Corners.¹⁴

WORKFORCE HOUSING

As the change in terminology from low-income housing to affordable housing indicates, the inability to secure housing is not only a problem among people identified by HUD as low-income. Officials in Madison, Flathead, Gallatin, Missoula, Beaverhead, Garfield, Richland, Treasure, Stillwater, Hill, Custer, Granite, and Carbon Counties all identify lack of workforce housing as a problem in their communities.

Businesses in Madison County must limit hours that they are open because of a shortage of staff, and many owners attribute the lack of available employees to the lack of available housing. A skilled nursing facility in Sheridan petitioned the county for assistance when its new employees

were unable to take positions because of lack of housing.¹⁵

Montana State University is one of the employers in Bozeman that has had difficulty retaining workers. According to the MSU Classified Employees Personnel Advisory Committee, the average Bozeman rent is affordable for only 1% of its staff.¹⁶

St. Patrick Hospital, WGM Group, Missoula Job Service, MEA/MFT, Montana Community Development Corp., Missoula Fire Department, and Missoula Police Department all relayed to county officials their concern that high housing prices serve as a disincentive to recruiting and retaining skilled workers.¹⁷

RESERVATION HOUSING

Public housing assistance on reservations has been under the regulations of the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 1996, and some funding is available through HUD and Rural Development programs. Impediments such as waiting lists for public housing (580 families on the Rocky Boy's Reservation¹⁸ and 350 on the Blackfeet Reservation¹⁹) and deteriorating housing stock, are familiar to other areas of the state. However, there are challenges unique to the tribes: the difficulty of obtaining mortgages on trust land; a tradition of not owning property; and the lack of financial and other entities that facilitate homeownership (e.g., banks, appraisers, title companies, real estate agents, etc). The director of the Blackfeet Housing Authority believes economic development is the only permanent solution to the tribes' chronic housing shortages.

FEDERAL PROGRAMS

In a 2007 speech, President George Bush reassured Americans worried about subprime mortgages that the federal government believes homeownership has a vital place in the nation. He stated, "When more families own their own homes, neighborhoods are more vibrant and communities are stronger."²⁰ Since the 1930s, when the federal government created its public housing programs, it

¹⁰Clark Fork Chronicle, March 25, 2008.

¹¹ U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000.

¹² SueAnn Grogan, in presentation at Wheeler Center Conference, The Price of Paradise, Affordable Housing in Montana, May 2007.

¹³ Mobile Home Decommissioning & Replacement and Mobile Home Park Acquisition Strategies for Montana - A Preliminary Analysis and Report, Community Development and Management Services, Kennedy & Flynn, June 2006.

¹⁴ Bozeman Daily Chronicle, August 11, 2007.

¹⁵ Barbie Durham, County Grant Coordinator/Administrator, Email, April 11, 2008.

¹⁶ Board of Regents meeting, February 28, 2007.

¹⁷ Mike Barton, Office of Planning and Grants, Email, April 18, 2008.

¹⁸ Susie Hay, Chippewa Cree Housing Authority

¹⁹ Ray Wilson, Blackfeet Housing Authority

²⁰Statement by President Bush on Homeownership Financing, August 31, 2007, <http://www.hud.gov/content/releases/pr07-123statement.cfm>.

has invested in helping Americans become homeowners.

Two federal agencies provide the bulk of the low-income housing assistance in Montana—the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Development Program. The federal government also contributes to home affordability through the individual income tax mortgage interest deduction. Federal expenditures for housing assistance for 2005 are listed below (not comprehensive).

2005 Federal Expenditures for Housing Assistance	
Estimate of reduction in Montanan's federal income taxes because of mortgage interest tax deduction ²¹	\$155,700,000
HUD CDBG Funds for Housing ²²	\$ 824,500
HUD Public Housing Rental Subsidies ²³	\$ 23,827,794
HUD Private Assisted Housing Rental Subsidies	\$ 68,034,101
HUD HOME Program Grants	\$ 6,243,681
HUD Section 184 Loans to Tribes	\$ 3,014,864
HUD Indian Housing Block Grant	\$ 24,714,666
USDA 502 Direct Loans ²⁴	\$ 16,045,318
USDA 502 Leveraged Loans	\$ 8,717,441
USDA Guaranteed Loans	\$ 56,818,631
USDA 504 Home Rehab Loans	\$ 134,090
USDA 504 Home Rehab Grants	\$ 297,925
USDA Mutual Self-Help Technical Assistance	\$ 954,681
USDA 521 Rental Assistance	\$ 2,871,532

The Montana Department of Commerce is the conduit for distributing HUD funds in the state. Montana's nonprofit public housing authorities are also important entities in distributing HUD money and creating and managing housing for eligible families. The U.S. Housing Act of 1937 initiated

the development of public housing authorities nationwide. Montana also provides an administrative and legal structure for public housing authorities in state law.²⁵ There are 18 housing authorities in Montana, including those on the reservations.

STATE

The Housing Act of 1975 is the seminal legislation for Montana's investment in housing programs.²⁶ The Act created a Board of Housing and gave the Board authority to issue revenue bonds to fund the Board and its programs. The Montana Department of Commerce, Board of Housing (MBOH), receives no general fund money and is financed entirely with bond proceeds for both operating costs and mortgage lending.

The MBOH uses the revenue from the sale of tax-exempt bonds to fund and/or administer the following programs (not comprehensive).

2005 MBOH Expenditures for Housing Assistance	
Homeownership Loan Program ²⁷	\$164,367,381
Low-Income Housing Tax Credit	\$ 1,589,615
Reverse Annuity Mortgages ²⁸	\$ 337,000

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Cities and counties have an intimate view of the disruption from housing stress and are adept at finding resources that fit their communities. Among the resources available to local governments are inclusionary zoning, developing housing plans, land banking, allowing accessory dwelling units, and reducing required parking or park areas.

Hill County is developing a housing plan. The county is conducting a housing needs survey and, with the assistance of Bear Paw Development, obtained a grant to prepare a housing market feasibility study, conduct community meetings to evaluate the need for elder services, and prepare a Preliminary Architectural Report. The District IV Human Resources Council that serves Hill, Blaine, and Liberty Counties, receives 10 calls a day related to affordable

²¹ Montana Department of Revenue

²² Economic Benefits of Montana Department of Commerce Housing Program Activities. MSU Billings, Center for Applied Economic Research, January 2007. "2005" refers to the state fiscal year, July 1 to June 30. Figure is for CDBG grants secured through MBOH only.

²³ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. "2005" refers to the federal fiscal year, October 1 to September 30.

²⁴ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Development Program. "2005" refers to the federal fiscal year, October 1 to September 30.

²⁵ Title 7, chapter 15, part 44, MCA.

²⁶ Codified at Title 90, chapter 6, part 1, MCA.

²⁷ Economic Benefits of Montana Department of Commerce Housing Program Activities. MSU Billings, Center for Applied Economic Research, January 2007. "2005" refers to the state fiscal year, July 1 to June 30.

²⁸ Minutes, Montana Board of Housing, October 15, 2007

housing, half inquiring about accessible units.²⁹

Bozeman has been brainstorming solutions to its high housing prices for over a decade and recently passed a work force housing ordinance that allows developers to reduce the amount of dedicated parkland in exchange for supplying affordable housing.

In the Flathead area, where high land costs are an obstacle to developing affordable housing, Kalispell, Whitefish, Columbia Falls, and Eureka are exploring community land trusts. Land trusts are administered by a nonprofit corporation that owns the land so a purchaser only pays for the price of the house itself.³⁰

NONPROFITS AS PARTNERS

When reviewing individual affordable housing projects, it becomes clear that homes get built, rehabilitated, and relocated through the partnerships of nonprofits; federal, state, and local governments; businesses; and homeowners.

The Central Butte Housing Development project is a good example of how different organizations and pools of money coalesce to build homes. According to the District XII Human Resource Council (HRC), 41% of families in the HRC service area that includes Butte are considered low-income by HUD standards.³¹ The National Affordable Housing Network, headquartered in Butte, is one of the organizations involved in the rehabilitation of the deteriorating pre-1930s neighborhood. The Network and the HRC are organizing the residents to assist with the rehabilitation plan and ensuring that the homes are weatherized. Habitat for Humanity will be building several of the houses with partner families, and the Catholic Dioceses of Helena has donated land. According to the draft environmental assessment completed by the city-county government, the project will be funded by HUD's Self-Help Opportunity and HOME Programs and USDA Rural Development's 502 mortgage funding and 523 Mutual Self-Help funding programs.³²

The District XII Human Resource Council mentioned above is one of 10 Human Resource Development Councils operating in the state, each serving a multicounty area. HRDCs are nonprofit corporations first established in 1965 as part of the president's war on poverty, and their focus is on improving the lives of the low-income populations in their region. As such, they are often partners or initiators of

affordable housing projects. Northwest Montana Human Resources Council, which serves Flathead, Lake, Lincoln, and Sanders Counties, has had success teaching families to build their own homes using Rural Development's Mutual Self-Help Program funds.

Nonprofit organizations are also educators. NeighborWorks Great Falls, in addition to building 160 infill houses, rehabilitating 55 homes, and removing more than 450 dilapidated structures from neighborhoods marked for rehabilitation, also provides homebuyer education and individual homeownership planning.³³

FOR PROFIT

A developer of low-income housing rentals in Bozeman remarked that though there is some financial profit in building affordable housing, there is also a psychological benefit.³⁴ The low income housing tax credit (LIHTC) offered through the MBOH is one of the tools for-profit developers use to increase the viability of their projects. In addition to a reduction in tax liability, the credit can also be sold to investors to act as a financing source. Bozeman's expedited review process has assisted builders in meeting the tight deadlines of the LIHTC program.³⁵

As with nonprofit organizations, industry also works with partners to promote housing affordability. In 2003, the MDOC, Montana Department of Environmental Quality, Montana Building Industry Association, American Institute of Architects, and Fannie Mae joined to produce "Montana Housing Solutions," a catalogue of affordable housing plans.

WHAT'S NEXT—PREDICTIONS ABOUT THE MARKET

Economists predict the downturn in the national economy will spill over into Montana, but with less impact. Since the state has fewer subprime mortgages, there will be fewer foreclosures and bankruptcies. According to the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, high homeownership rates in the United States were in part caused by "innovations" in the mortgage industry that allowed for high risk loans with small or zero down payments, and lenders are now less likely to make those loans. At least through 2008, the housing market will stabilize, i.e., no longer see dramatic increases in costs, but regions will be affected differently depending on how inflated house prices were due to speculation and the number of second homeowners.

Note: For those interested in learning more about affordable housing and economic development in Montana, information about the 2008 Montana Housing Conference, "Housing:

²⁹ Kathy Bessette, Hill County Commissioner, Email, April 11, 2008.

³⁰ Daily Interlake, February 6, 2008.

³¹ Poverty in the Midst of Plenty, HRC Biennial Report 2007

³² Central Butte Affordable Housing Draft Environmental Assessment, City and County of Butte-Silver Bow, Montana, March 26, 2007.

³³ Sheila Rice, Executive Director, NeighborWorks, Email, April 16, 2008.

³⁴ William Dabney, in presentation at Wheeler Center Conference, The Price of Paradise, Affordable Housing in Montana, May 2007.

³⁵ NewWest.net, August 1, 2006.

Montana's Economic Edge," is available on the MDOC, Housing Coordination Team website.



INTERIM CALENDAR

UNLESS OTHERWISE SPECIFIED, ALL ROOM DESIGNATIONS ARE IN THE CAPITOL

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>May 2008</p>						
				<p>1 Energy and Telecommunications Committee, Room 172, 8 a.m.</p>	<p>2 Energy and Telecommunications Committee, Room 172, 9 a.m.</p>	<p>3</p>
<p>4</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>7 Economic Affairs Committee, UM campus, University Center, Rooms 330-331, 9:30 a.m.</p>	<p>8 Economic Affairs Committee, UM campus, University Center, Rooms 330-331, 8:30 a.m., and Mission Mountain Food Center, Ronan, 12:30 p.m.</p>	<p>9</p>	<p>10</p>
<p>11</p>	<p>12 Environmental Quality Council, Room 102</p>	<p>13 Environmental Quality Council, Room 102</p>	<p>14</p>	<p>15</p>	<p>16 Legislative auditor search subcommittee, Room 172, 9 a.m. Fire Suppression Committee, Lewiston, MT</p>	<p>17</p>
<p>18</p>	<p>19</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>21</p>	<p>22</p>	<p>23</p>	<p>24</p>
<p>25</p>	<p>26</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28</p>	<p>29 HB 49 subcommittee, Room 152, 10 a.m.</p>	<p>30 Fire Suppression Committee, Miles Community College, Room 106, Miles City, MT</p>	<p>31</p>

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>June 2008</h1>						
1	2	3	4	5 LFC performance measurement work groups, 9 a.m. Legislative Finance Committee, Room 102, 1 p.m. State Fund/workers' comp subcommittee	6 Legislative Finance Committee, Room 102, 8 a.m. Legislative auditor search subcommittee, Room 172, 9 a.m.	7
8	9	10	11 Children, Families, Health , and Human Services Committee, Room 137, 10 a.m. CFHHS, SJR 15 subcommittee, Room 137, 8 a.m.	12 Postsecondary Education Policy and Budget Subcommittee, Room 102, 9 a.m. Education and Local Government Committee	13 Education and Local Government Committee	14
15	16	17	18	19 Fire Suppression Committee, Seeley Lake, Thompson Falls	20 Legislative Audit Committee, Room 137, 8:30 a.m. Fire Suppression Committee, Libby	21
22	23 State-Tribal Relations Committee, Pablo, MT	24	25	26 Law and Justice Committee	27 Law and Justice Committee	28
29	30 State Administration and Veterans' Affairs Committee	State Administration and Veterans' Affairs Committee, July 1				

LEGISLATIVE SERVICES DIVISION
PO BOX 201706
HELENA MT 59620-1706