



## **Promoting Economic Success for Montana Families**

**National Conference of State Legislatures  
January 25, 2006  
Helena, Montana**

### **About the Seminar**

The rising cost of living is making it increasingly difficult for American families to reach and maintain middle-class status. The purpose of this seminar is to provide information on policy approaches to help low-income working families succeed. These issues cut across traditional committee jurisdictions including economic development, financial services, housing, education, entrepreneurship, human services, labor and workforce development, budget and tax. Seminar topics will include: building assets through savings, entrepreneurship, homeownership and education; financial education and literacy; and tax incentives to help working families. Time will be built into the agenda for discussion between legislator participants and presenters, to identify information needs and to talk about next steps.

The seminar is sponsored by the National Conference of State Legislatures with funds from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, established by Jim Casey, founder of United Parcel Service (UPS), in 1948.



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### **Agenda**

- 10:00 am - 10:15 am**     **Welcome and Introductions**  
Senator Trudi Schmidt, Chair, Interim Committee on Children,  
Families, Health and Human Services
- 10:15 am - 10:30 am**     **Seminar Overview**  
Mary Fairchild, NCSL, Denver
- 10:30 am - 11:30 am**     **Is There A Future for the Rural Economy?**
- Families in rural America face significant educational, social, and economic challenges, just as their urban counterparts do. This session will examine the challenges facing America's rural families and innovative policy approaches to boost economic and workforce development.
- Moderator:             Mary Fairchild, NCSL
- Speaker:                 Brian Dabson, Rural Policy Research Institute,  
Truman School of Public Affairs, University of  
Missouri- Columbia
- 11:30 am - 12:30 pm**     **Helping Working Families Succeed**

An increasing number of Americans find themselves deep in debt and not saving enough to cover emergency expenses. This session will present an overview of the financial situation of Montana families and the importance of building assets to achieve and maintain financial stability. Legislators will be briefed on the Montana Financial Education Coalition.

Moderator: Mary Fairchild, NCSL

Speakers: Dr. Marsha Goetting, Montana State University Extension Service  
Sue Woodrow, Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, Helena Branch and President, Montana Financial Education Coalition

**12:30 Noon - 1:30pm Lunch and Discussion**

Participants will engage in a general discussion about the importance of involving multiple sectors in achieving economic success for Montana families and hear about current activities in the Governor's office and elsewhere.

**1:30 pm - 3:00 pm**

**Asset Building Strategies in Montana**

Many working families live paycheck to paycheck, with no economic safety net and little or no opportunity to acquire assets. This session will focus on private and public sector strategies to help families increase savings and preserve assets. Issues to be address include financial education, Individual Development Accounts (IDAs), affordable homeownership, alternative financing products and the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

Moderator: Mary Fairchild, NCSL

Speakers: Jeanne Saarinen, Montana Credit Unions for Community Development, Helena  
Shannon Augare, Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Great Falls  
Maureen Garrity, MGarrity Business Consulting, Helena  
Judy Smith, HomeWORD, Missoula

**3:00 pm - 3:30**

**Real Life**

Participants will hear about the benefits of asset building products and policies from a Montana family.

**Speaker**

**3:30pm - 4:30 pm**

**Next Steps for Montana**

Participants will discuss next steps including involvement from multiple sectors such as economic development, education, financial institutions and workforce development.

**4:30 pm**

**Adjourn**