

## UNIVERSAL SYSTEMS BENEFIT PROGRAM

### LEGISLATOR NOTICE

The Legislative Services Division is required to offer a brief history on the subject matter of a bill draft request prior to drafting (5-4-105, MCA; [Chapter 309, Laws of 2017](#)). The history must include related legislation introduced over the last five sessions and hyperlinks to the bill, hearing information, and fiscal notes. The legislation links below open to the page showing the status and history of bills introduced on this topic in the past. The bill text and any related fiscal notes can be accessed through the link at the top of that page.

**Legislation can be complex and this history is not intended to be exhaustive. Please contact the drafter of the requested bill for more information.**

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### Background Materials and Research

#### Topic Summary:

Most of the funding for electric and gas utility efficiency programs in Montana comes from the Universal Systems Benefits (USB) fund passed by the legislature in 1997 as part of the electricity deregulation legislation. USB programs were established to ensure continued utility funding to support low-income energy assistance, energy conservation, and renewable resource projects. Investor-owned utilities and electric cooperatives are required to establish and fund USB programs that meet these three public purposes. There is a USB surcharge on each electric and gas utility customer's bill that funds the utility USB programs. On average, this charge adds about one dollar to customers' natural gas and electric bills each month. Since 2007, more than \$60 million of funding has been contributed by utilities toward USB programs in the state.

#### Legislative Services Division Materials:

[Understanding Energy in Montana, 2018](#)

#### Other Materials:

[Universal Systems Benefits Program, Legislative Audit, 2014](#)

### Introduced Legislation

\*Chapter number assigned means bill was passed and approved.

**2015**

[Senate Bill 10](#) – Chapter Number Assigned -- AN ACT EXEMPTING CERTAIN NATURAL GAS UTILITIES FROM THE REQUIREMENTS OF A UNIVERSAL SYSTEM BENEFITS PROGRAM; AMENDING SECTION 69-3-1408, MCA; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE AND A RETROACTIVE APPLICABILITY DATE.

[Senate Bill 11](#) – Chapter Number Assigned -- AN ACT EXEMPTING CERTAIN PUBLIC UTILITIES FROM THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE UNIVERSAL SYSTEM BENEFITS PROGRAM; AMENDING SECTION 69-8-402, MCA; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE AND A RETROACTIVE APPLICABILITY DATE.

[Senate Bill 150](#) – Chapter Number Assigned -- AN ACT INCREASING THE AMOUNT OF UNIVERSAL SYSTEM BENEFITS FUNDS USED BY A PUBLIC UTILITY FOR LOW-INCOME ENERGY AND WEATHERIZATION ASSISTANCE; CLARIFYING WAYS A PUBLIC UTILITY MAY PROVIDE ASSISTANCE; AMENDING SECTIONS 69-8-402 AND 69-8-412, MCA; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE AND A RETROACTIVE APPLICABILITY DATE.

[Senate Bill 312](#) – Chapter Number Assigned -- AN ACT REVISING UTILITY UNIVERSAL SYSTEM BENEFITS PROGRAMS; REQUIRING THE ENERGY AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS INTERIM COMMITTEE TO REVIEW REPORTS; CLARIFYING LARGE CUSTOMER ANNUAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS; PROVIDING PENALTIES FOR UTILITIES AND LARGE CUSTOMERS THAT FAIL TO FILE UNIVERSAL SYSTEM BENEFITS REPORTS; AMENDING SECTIONS 69-8-402 AND 69-8-414, MCA; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE AND AN APPLICABILITY DATE.

**2009**

[House Bill 27](#) – Chapter Number Assigned -- AN ACT ELIMINATING THE TERMINATION DATE FOR THE UNIVERSAL SYSTEM BENEFITS CHARGE RATES; CLARIFYING THE ENERGY AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS INTERIM COMMITTEE'S OVERSIGHT AUTHORITY OVER UNIVERSAL SYSTEM BENEFITS PROGRAMS; AMENDING SECTION 69-8-402, MCA; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE.