

**November 2020**  
**Montana Staff Salaries, Comparative pay data, and request for increases**

Current Consumer Counsel salaries and proposed increases:

<b>MCC Director Proposal 9% increase</b>	
\$55.91 (Current Base pay) =	\$116,292.80
\$60.94 (Proposed Base pay) =	\$126,755.20

Justification: There are four legislative agency directors. Three have received base pay increases in recent years through approval from Legislative Council. The base pay for those positions currently:

- Audit Division: \$56.47
- Fiscal Division: \$68.27
- Legislative Services: \$68.27

If this request is approved, the base pay for the Consumer Counsel Director will be \$60.94.

The Consumer Counsel has the constitutional and statutory duty to represent consumer interests before the Montana Public Service Commission, Federal regulatory agencies, and State and Federal Courts. The Consumer Counsel reviews rate requests and other filings submitted by regulated utilities, assigns and supervises analysis of filings by professional staff, prepares or assigns intervention in appropriate state and federal regulatory proceedings, participates in administrative and judicial litigation, including: conducting discovery, filing testimony and pleadings, examining witnesses, filing briefs, oral argument, preparing petitions for judicial review, participating in and supervising settlement negotiations, and supervising participation in rulemaking and non-docketed activities as appropriate. The Consumer Counsel meets regularly with commission and utility representatives and supervises a five person administrative and professional staff, and has responsibility over administrative functions including accounting, budget preparation and personnel matters.

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Following are proposals for Montana Consumer Counsel staff salary increases. Legislative Services has given authority to legislative directors to approve pay increases for staff positions based on market analyses. The Consumer Committee could grant that authority to the Director of the Consumer Counsel. These proposals would be approved if the Consumer Committee agrees to grant that authority in an approved motion at our final 2020 meeting on November 10. Alternatively, the Committee can act directly on these proposed changes.

**Senior Attorney Proposal 9% Increase**

\$42.70 (Current Base pay) =	\$88,816.00
\$46.54 (Proposed Base pay) =	\$96,803.20

Thirty-five State of Montana attorneys are near or above that rate, 12 in the Department of Justice, two in the Legislative Branch, with a range up to \$63.96 base pay. The MCC attorney is one of if not the most demanding attorney position in state government, routinely being matched with utilities' in-house counsel and private firm attorneys.

Duties include Legal research, preparation of briefs, findings of fact, additional pleadings, oral arguments, sponsoring expert witnesses at hearings and examination of other witnesses. Responding to public inquiries. Assisting in drafting proposed legislation and testimony before legislative committees. Communication and coordination with Public Service Commission staff and commissioners. The current MCC Senior Attorney previously served several years as a staff attorney for the Montana Public Service Commission and is now approaching five years of service with our office.

**Auditor/Economist proposed 9% salary increase**

\$40.77 (Current Base) =	\$84,801.60
\$44.44 (Proposed Base) =	\$92,435.20

After this increase, there would still be 16 more highly paid non-director positions in the Legislative Branch, including "Auditor," "Deputy Auditor," and "Researcher." This is a highly technical and demanding position that involves working with our consultants and often preparing testimony and withstanding cross-examination to defend positions. The current office holder not only is a licensed CPA, but has a Master's degree in accounting, a graduate certificate in public utility regulation and economics, and is a faculty member for NARUC's (the national commission association) rate school. Paul has been with our office about 12 years.

**Economist/ Auditor Researcher proposed 5% salary increase**

\$37.59 (Current Base) =	\$78,187.20
\$39.47 (Proposed Base) =	\$82,097.60

After this salary increase, 26 similar positions of auditor or researcher would still be more highly paid non-director positions in the Legislative Branch. This position is called upon to file testimony and appear in hearings. The current office holder has a Master's degree in economics and over 12 years' experience

in utility regulation, including four years at the Kansas commission as a Senior Research Economist. Jaime just passed his eight year mark with our office.

**Office Manager proposed 3% salary increase**

\$25.39 (Current Base) =	\$52,811.20
\$26.15 (Proposed Base) =	\$54,392.00

This position encompasses tasks that are performed across multiple positions in larger agencies. In addition to office management, Suzanne addresses technology issues and has computer skills to assist staff and interface with state information technology. After this salary increase, several positions generally described as operations manager and technical services would still be more highly paid non-director positions in the Legislative Branch. Suzanne joined our office eight years ago.