



Contact: David Hoffman
Manager-External Affairs
406-457-5300

Montanans Want Kids to Stay

*Parents Say Montana is a Great Place to Raise a Family, but
They're Concerned that a Lack of Good Jobs will Drive Children Out of the State*

BILLINGS, Mont. (March 28, 2006) — An overwhelming nine out of 10 Montanans worry that a lack of well-paying jobs eventually could drive their children out of the state and away from their families, according to a statewide survey released today by PPL Montana.

That's an unsettling situation for Montanans because of their strong emphasis on family ties. Eight of 10 survey respondents say having their family members in Montana is an important reason for living in the state. Nine of 10 Montanans feel a sense of community is important to them, and 93 percent say Montana is a good place to raise children.

PPL Montana's quality-of-life survey also revealed that Montanans rank their home state as one of the best places in the United States to live. And to keep it that way, they expect the state's leaders to create a stronger economy and quality jobs, but without sacrificing what makes Montana such a special place to live.

The survey also found that Montanans worry about the many social and economic challenges facing the state. But despite the formidable challenges, Montanans remain upbeat: They say the state is headed in the right direction and believe Montana's quality of life will be better in the future.

"It's clear by these survey results that family ties are very important to Montanans, and that they expect the public and private sectors to do all they can to provide the kinds of jobs that will prevent their children from having to look elsewhere for work," said Brad Spencer, chief operating officer of PPL Montana. "We need to engage in meaningful public policy discussions that will make that happen."

To allow their children to stay here after they finish school, a clear majority of Montanans — 55 percent — want state leaders to work more aggressively to attract more businesses and industries to the state, thus creating higher-paying jobs.

Right now, residents are not optimistic that their children will be able to find suitable employment in Montana. That's because they don't have much confidence in the state's current economic climate. In fact, six in 10 residents rate the state's economy either "fair" or "poor."

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In comparison to their concerns about the state's economy, residents generally feel Montana's K-12 public school systems and colleges and universities are doing a good job preparing their children for future employment opportunities.

Six in 10 Montanans give public school education a grade of "B" or better. Seven in 10 respondents rate colleges and universities as "B" or better for quality.

The Roper Public Affairs Group, which conducted the wide-ranging survey for PPL Montana, interviewed 1,013 adult residents across the state during a two-week period last December. The University of Montana Bureau of Business and Economic Research assisted in the study.

PPL Montana operates coal-fired power plants at Colstrip and Billings, as well as 11 hydroelectric power plants throughout the state. PPL EnergyPlus operates a trading floor in Butte that markets and sells power in the wholesale energy market. With offices in Billings, Butte and Helena, the companies employ 500 people in Montana.

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Note to Editors: This is the second of two news releases, issued today by PPL Montana, expanding on results of a statewide quality-of-life survey. Please call the number above if you did not receive both news releases. Additional survey information can be found on our Web site at www.pplmontana.com.