Montana Taxpayers Association
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January 2015

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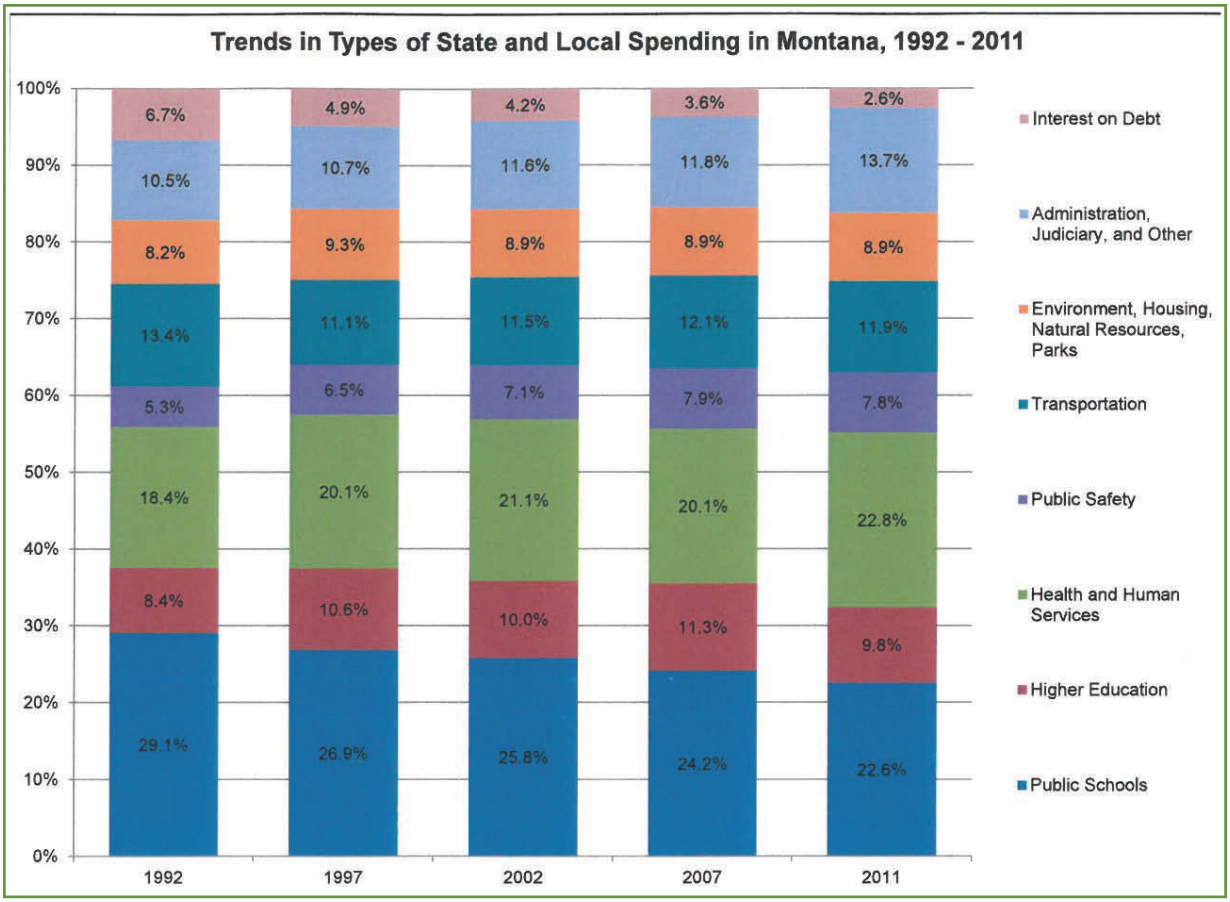
UNDERSTANDING THE GRAPHS

The following chart shows the portion of the state and local budgets that are devoted to various services. The first graph shows how the priorities of government spending have changed. Some categories have increased as a percentage of the total budget and some have decreased. Decreases in share of spending on a category do not mean actual spending has gone down. When viewing graphs and charts it is important to understand what the chart is designed to show. This is pointed out in the second chart. It takes the same information and shows it in a format based on actual dollars spent.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

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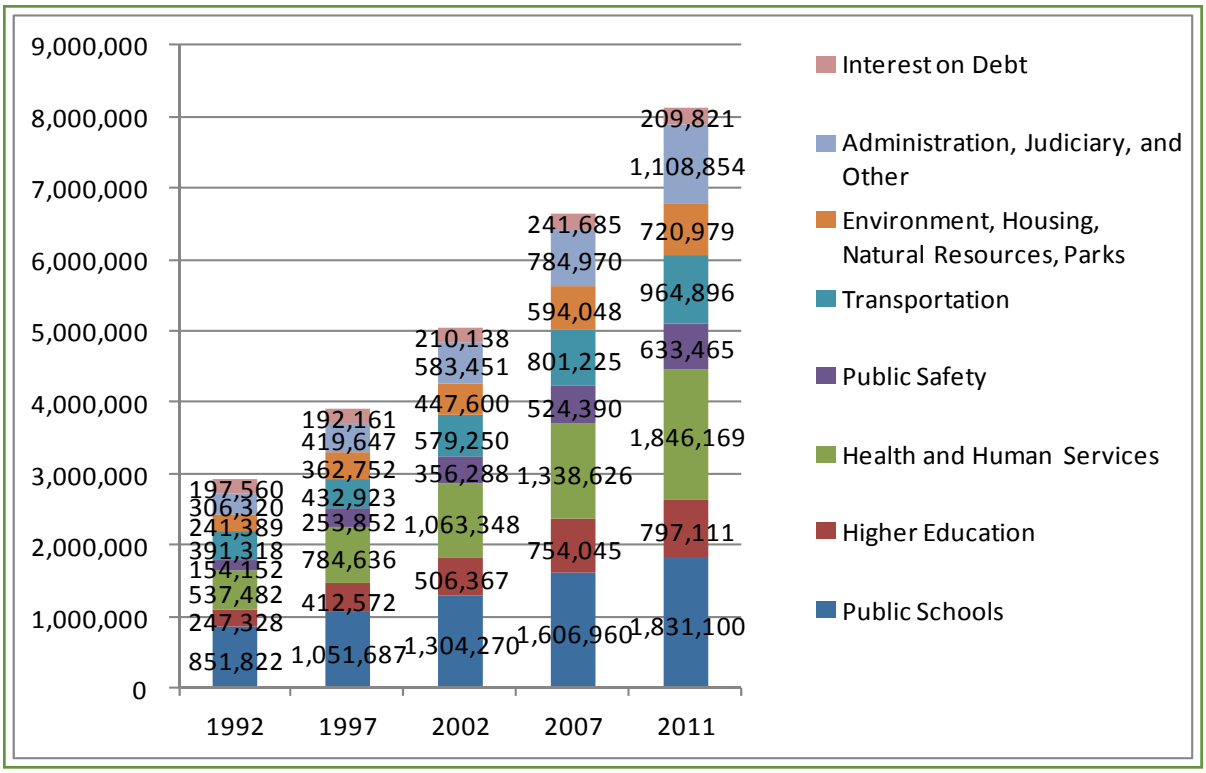
UNDERSTANDING THE GRAPHS *(continued)*

The graph below uses the same information that was used to create the previous graph. Instead of focusing on the percentage of the budget a particular service segment fills, this graph shows the amount of dollars government devotes to each category. In comparing the graphs you can see that even in the areas that have decreased in percentage of spending, they still have significant increases in dollar spending. What has happened is another segment so spending has increased at even a higher dollar amount increasing its percentage of the total spending.