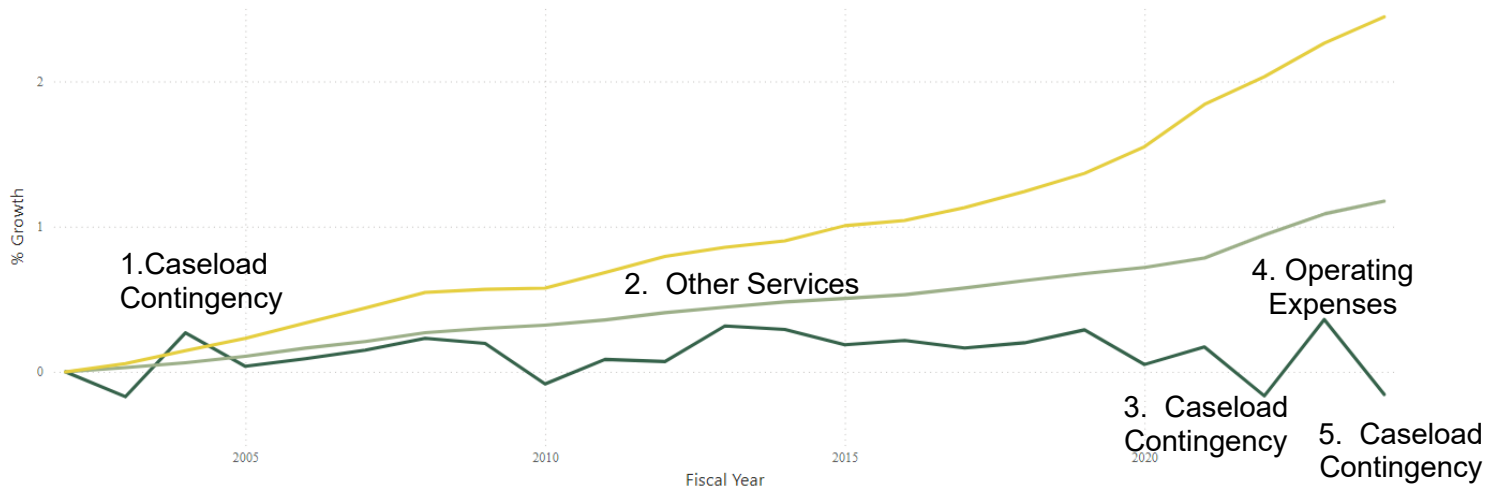


Montana Consumer Counsel

The below chart compares state resource expenditure growth to the growth in personal income and growth in inflation adjusted for population. Montana statute, 17-8-106, MCA, recommends using growth in personal income for comparison purposes. Personal income is a measure for growth in the economy. Comparing growth allows financial planners to consider past and future demands in services or changes in revenues.

The chart shows the growth in state resource expenditures compared to the growth in personal income and growth in inflation.

● State Resources Growth ● CPI Adjusted for Population ● MT Personal Income Growth



In general, all funds growth in total expenditures for the Consumer Counsel has been lower than the rate of inflation adjusted for population.

The increases and decreases of expenditures are primarily related to changes in contracted services and the use of caseload contingency funding. The following provides more detail on the inflection points of the charts:

1. The Consumer Counsel's caseloads are determined by utility filings with the Public Service Commission and budgeted using historic averages. To provide for unanticipated increases in utility filings the legislature has provided appropriations for caseload contingencies. In FY 2004 the Consumer Counsel expended \$219,000 of the caseload contingency costs associated with the NorthWestern Energy bankruptcy, and telecommunications dockets in areas such as provider designation, service funding, and access charge structure.
2. HB 2 for the 2011 biennium included a reduction to operating expenses of \$375,000 each year for contracted services.
3. In FY 2022, the Public Service Commission filings and state and federal court hearings did not require the use of the caseload contingency.
4. In FY 2023 the agency experienced an increase in general operating expenses, as compared to FY 2022 and FY 2024.



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5. FY 2024 included a restricted, biennial appropriation of \$150,000 for caseload contingencies in their operating expense budget. In FY 2024, the Consumer Counsel did not require the use of these funds.

General Fund

The Consumer Counsel is not appropriated general fund.

State Special Revenue Funds

The Consumer Counsel is funded by state special revenue generated by fees imposed on all regulated entities under the jurisdiction of the Public Service Commission. The chart above represents all funding for this program. The funding formula is specified in 69-1-223, MCA. Each year the Department of Revenue determines the total gross operating revenue generated by all regulated activities within the state for the previous fiscal year. The Department of Revenue then computes the percentage tax necessary to yield an amount equal to the current appropriation, with no excess funds. If collection of excess revenue occurs, the amount charged to the regulated utilities for the following year is reduced.



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