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NEWS RELEASE

Aug. 4, 2009

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**MONTANA INDEX OF CONSUMER SENTIMENT
REBOUNDS FROM 15-YEAR LOW**

MISSOULA –

Montanans are feeling much more optimistic about the economy these days, resulting in the Montana Index of Consumer Sentiment rising nearly 15 percent since March. The rise is consistent with other evidence that shows consumer spending recovering from its recent slump.

The University of Montana's Bureau of Business and Economic Research reports that the most recent index from June/July is 107, up from 90 in March when it was at a 15-year low. The index peaked at 131 in fall 2007.

The Montana Index of Consumer Sentiment is based on a BBER telephone survey. It is comparable to the University of Michigan's U.S. index and is calculated using five questions concerning individual aspects and perceptions about the state and national economy.

"This is the first concrete sign of the impending turnaround in the state economy," said BBER Director Patrick Barkey.

The U.S. consumer sentiment index was 66 for the same time period, up from 57 in March. The data show that Montana's consumers remain more confident than their national counterparts, even at the low point in the economic cycle.

Barkey attributes the rise in consumer sentiment to the modest rebound in stock markets and to other signs that the downturn has bottomed out. It also may reflect optimism over the stimulus package. He notes that the index is one of many pieces of data the bureau uses to measure and understand Montana's economy.

"This is the best information available on how Montana consumers are feeling about the economy," Barkey said. "It supports many of our assumptions about the forecast and should be of special value to anyone in the forecasting business."

Information regarding the Montana Index of Consumer Sentiment and other measures of Montana's economy will be presented at the 4th Annual Economic Outlook Midyear Update, which will be held in cities across the state in coming weeks. For more information visit the BBER Web site at <http://www.bber.umt.edu>.

The index is benchmarked to a baseline of 100 assigned at its introduction in March 1982. The most recent findings are based on a representative Montana sample of 430 adults polled from June 29 to July 23 by BBER's survey-based research department.

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