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Subject: Toole announces PSC Re-election Campaign

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*******FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*******

Ken Toole, vice-chairman of the Public Service Commission, has announced that he is filing for re-election. "This is a critical time for Montana consumers" Toole said, "Energy policy is once again on the front burner". Toole is nearing the end of his first term on the Commission. He will be on the ballot in the 2010 election cycle.

Toole said he will campaign on his record and his knowledge of the issues. "From opposing electric deregulation to going after QWEST for excessive profits, people know I am on the side of small consumers in Montana." Toole said. "We are entering a new era of power generation. In the future we will use what we have more efficiently and we will develop more clean and renewable sources of power." Toole added that there are many complex challenges in overhauling the power system. "We have a chance to have a cleaner, more efficient and more affordable energy system" Toole said, "But we have to make sure that middle class rate payers are treated fairly."

"I have a clear record of working for small consumers in Montana over a long period of time." Toole said, "Standing up to big utility corporations isn't the easy thing to do, but it is the right thing to do." Toole, one of Montana's leading opponents to electric deregulation, served in the state senate as Chair of the Energy and Telecommunications Committee before being elected to the PSC. He also headed up the effort to buy back the hydro-electric dams on Montana's rivers after they were sold to Pennsylvania Power Company. Toole pointed to his record on the PSC as the best evidence for voters to consider in this race.

Toole opposed the buy-out of Northwestern Energy by a foreign investment bank. The sale had been supported by many interest groups in the state but was denied by the PSC. Today that investment bank is no longer in business.

Toole organized a group of small customers to file a consumer complaint against QWEST Corporation for earning excessive profits. The complaint was resolved by QWEST giving \$16 million in rate reductions to Montana consumers and agreeing to extend broad band service to 28 rural Montana communities.

Toole initiated a proceeding before the PSC to require disclosure of utility executive salaries in Montana. Toole said he hopes there will be additional proceedings in this matter this spring.

A lawyer and former insurance salesman who owns a water utility in Helena has filed to run against Toole in the election. Media sources have also reported that former Secretary of State, Brad Johnson has also intends to file in this race. "I hope we can have an issue oriented campaign" Toole said, noting that the public is tired of the shrill rhetoric in the political process. "Name calling does nothing to inform the public about candidates' position on important issues"

Toole said he has been overwhelmed by the support he has already received in the race. "I have heard from people all over Montana". Noting that more than 300 people have sent contributions and words of encouragement, Toole said, "Times are really tough. It means a lot to me that so many Montanans have reached into their pocket books to support this campaign."

The Public Service Commission is responsible for regulating public utilities in Montana. The commission has authority over rates and charges of electric and gas companies as well as privately owned water companies and taxi and limousine services. The commission is comprised of five members elected from districts across the state. Toole's district covers Lewis and Clark, Flathead, Lake, Glacier, Pondera and Teton counties.

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