

Share the Pennies

SMALL CHANGE, BIG DIFFERENCE.



What is Share the Pennies?

Started in 2013, Share the Pennies is a voluntary bill round-up program that provides grants for home weatherization projects for low-income MLGW customers. Participating customers have their utility costs rounded up to the next whole dollar, and the extra change goes toward weatherization grants. For example, if your utility costs were \$74.50, they would be rounded up to \$75, and 50 cents would go toward the grant program.

Beginning in January 2018, low-income homeowners will be able to apply through MIFA for grants of up to \$4,000 to improve energy efficiency and reduce utility costs due to wasted energy.

Share the Pennies is not a bill assistance program. Funds for weatherization improvements are only available for resident homeowners. Rental properties are ineligible.

What is changing about Share the Pennies?

On Feb. 22, 2017, the MLGW Board of Commissioners approved changes to Share the Pennies, including transitioning to an opt-out model for all customers. This means instead of customers contacting MLGW to enroll, all customers would be automatically enrolled but will be able to contact MLGW to remove themselves from the program.

Currently, Share the Pennies is still an opt-in program. For now, no customers' bills will be rounded up unless they have requested to enroll.

Beginning Jan. 1, 2018, all customers will be enrolled in the Share the Pennies round-up program, unless they have opted out. Any customer who wishes to opt out after that point will still be able to do so. They will also be able to request a refund for any donation to the program for up to six months from initial enrollment.

What led to this change?

The MLGW Neighborhood Advisory Council — led by MLGW customers — along with Just Energy Memphis (NAACP, Southern Alliance for Clean Energy and the Sierra Club) and Memphis City Councilwoman Patrice Robinson, worked together around a shared goal of finding ways to help some of those most in need in our community. One way to help is to reduce wasted energy in their homes and increase energy efficiency through Share the Pennies. To increase the amount of good MLGW can do in the areas we serve, they suggested making Share the Pennies an opt-out program instead of opt-in. That means automatically enrolling all MLGW customers in the bill round-up program and allowing them to remove themselves if they decide not to participate.

Councilwoman Robinson proposed a resolution to the Memphis City Council to ask the MLGW board to vote on making Share the Pennies an opt-out program for all customers. The council passed the resolution with a 10-0 vote. The MLGW Board of Commissioners voted to approve proposed changes on Feb. 22, 2017.

Can I opt out of Share the Pennies?

Any customer may opt out of the Share the Pennies round-up program before or after Jan. 1, 2018 through any of the following methods:

- Visit mlgw.com/share and submit the opt-out form.
- Download the MLGW app on your mobile device: ow.ly/SL0TB (Android) and ow.ly/LpE9Y (iOS)
- Call our Customer Care Center at 544-6549 (MLGW), press 1-2-6-2 and follow the prompts, or speak with a Service Advisor.
- Visit an MLGW community office.

When will all customers be enrolled in Share the Pennies?

Customers will be enrolled in the round-up program on Jan. 1, 2018. If you do not wish to participate, you may opt out through any of the methods listed in the question above. **No customer will be automatically enrolled until 2018.**

How much do customers give through Share the Pennies?

On average, customers give about 50 cents per month. In an entire year, most customers average about \$6. The most any customer could give through rounding up in 12 months of billing is \$11.88 total. Most customers give much less per year.

Can landlords or renters qualify for grants through Share the Pennies?

Rental properties are ineligible for Share the Pennies grants. For information about weatherization for rental units in accordance to the City of Memphis Rental Ordinance, call 322-5757.

Isn't this like a tax?

Share the Pennies remains a voluntary program, as it has always been. The only difference is that customers will now be enrolled by default. Any customer who wishes to opt out of Share the Pennies will be able to do so easily and can request a refund for up to the previous six months of donations.

Why should I donate to Share the Pennies?

Many low-income customers in our community struggle with a high “energy burden” — meaning they use a higher percentage of their resources to pay for home energy costs, like basic heating and cooling. This is due to a combination of poverty and energy-inefficient homes — even though MLGW provides the lowest combined utility rates in the nation.

Older homes weren't designed to be energy efficient, and homeowners who can't afford simple maintenance are unable to reduce wasted energy, which leads to higher utility bills, making it even harder to maintain their homes. This is especially true for homeowners who are elderly or disabled.

Share the Pennies, sponsored by MLGW and MIFA, is designed to help homeowners lower their energy burden. The grants funded by donations enable low-income customers to make basic energy efficiency improvements (e.g., fixing broken windows, replacing insulation, or repairing a furnace), reducing wasted energy. Though most customers give only about 50 cents per month, it adds up to be life-changing for those who receive the help. Share the Pennies does not provide bill assistance. These are energy-efficiency grants for residents who own their homes.

How can I apply for a grant from Share the Pennies?

MIFA has information about eligibility available on their website. Visit mifa.org/sharethepennies to learn more.