



BILLINGS GAZETTE  
COMMUNICATIONS



# VOTER GUIDE



2024 PRIMARY  
ELECTION

# We have a job to do. Here's how we do it

## LEE MONTANA

Welcome to the Lee Montana 2024 Voter Guide.

This year features one of the nation's hottest Senate races, an open House seat, and state offices from the governor, Legislature and Supreme Court justices to the administrative heads of Office of Public Instruction, Secretary of State, Auditor, and Attorney General. This publication will be available in print and online throughout the campaign season as a resource for learning who is running for what job, what they stand for and how to contact them.

But there's much more to come. As the largest network of full-time journalists in the state, Lee Montana will catalog the issues important to Montanans and present them to candidates for response. After all, they represent you — the voters.

There's also lots to learn about ballot initiatives, election law, and the groups or movements that influence statewide politics. We want to be clear about how we do this. And we always want to know how to do it better. If you have questions about our reporting, see something missing, or need something more, let us know.

### Mission statement

Advancing the principles of the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment, we journalists commit to preserving freedom of speech and the rights of people to gather, express their beliefs and converse with their government. Lee Montana newsrooms connect people across the Rocky Mountain West to their public servants, business colleagues and neighbors. We explore the issues, provide the data and report the debates and decisions that affect lives.

### Who's doing the work?

Lee Montana journalists will cover the 2024 elections at both local and statewide levels. Our newsrooms in Missoula, Helena, Butte, Billings and Hamilton will concentrate on races and issues closest to their readership, such as county commissions, legislative seats and mill levies. In addition, the Lee State Bureau fields reporters tracking statewide office races such as governor and Supreme Court justice, state ballot initiatives and federal congressional races. Local reporters with special expertise will weigh in on some topics, such as how wildlife management or energy policy is reflected in candidates' campaigns.



The 2024 Montana primary election day is June 4.

### How do we choose what to cover?

Each campaigner or issue advocate has a list of reasons why they are most qualified or correct. Montana voters have their own concerns about what's important to them and how they want those needs met. As reporters, we strive to make campaign positions easy to find and understand, while testing them against the questions our readership audience raises. As representatives of the public at-large, we will ask campaigners to debate their opponents, back up their claims with evidence, and respond to voters' interests. Wherever possible, we will push campaigners to be available to the voting public.

We will also pay close attention to the mechanics of Montana's political system, including voting policy, political party activity, campaign finances, and the influence of out-of-state interests on Montana issues. We will look for connections explaining how national trends or actions affect Montana and where Montana choices might determine national outcomes.

### What won't we cover?

Every campaign believes it has truth on its side. Our mission as journalists is to test those claims in light of what opponents and disinterested observers say. We strive to do that using neutral sources, or where necessary, by bringing transparency to the sources of the claims. We will be on watch for manufactured disputes and distorted accusations. And this election cycle, we will mount extra guard for disinformation ploys intended to confuse or disrupt legitimate campaign activity. While we must be humble in pursuit of the truth, we will be consistent and forceful in pointing out things that are demonstrably false or incorrect.

### How do we minimize bias in political coverage?

We give priority to candidates and questioners who commit to principles of fair play, transparent campaigning and civil discourse. And we commit to being transparent about our own reporting. We

welcome public and constructive criticism about the work we do, and pledge to be responsive to public feedback.

### How do we report on hateful rhetoric, actions?

Violence, intimidation and bigotry have no place in American political discourse. Candidates and activists who depend on such tactics draw attention away from their governing credibility. We strive to balance all our reporting toward advancing the public welfare. Where possible, we weigh the potential impact our reporting on aggressive public activity might have on the targets of that action. We will always consider ways to mitigate harm while informing the wider audience.

### How are we doing?

Let us know, and we'll respond. Want to see all our political election coverage? Follow online at [missoulian.com](https://missoulian.com), [helenair.com](https://helenair.com), [mtstandard.com](https://mtstandard.com), [billingsgazette.com](https://billingsgazette.com) and [ravallirepublic.com](https://ravallirepublic.com).

# 2024 Primary Election Voter Guide: The Questions

## U.S. Senate/House

1. How would you improve relations between U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and state wildlife managers on ESA protection?
2. Where would you direct federal energy investments in Montana? Beyond “all of the above,” what energy options would get your priority attention?
3. What is your top priority in addressing how the VA serves Montana veterans and how will you hold the agency accountable?
4. Where would you like to see Congress set wildland fighter compensation and how would you propose paying for it?
5. Native Americans in Montana die a generation younger than their white neighbors. What will you do to improve health outcomes in tribal communities?

## Governor

1. Would you sign a bill continuing Medicaid expansion in Montana past 2025? Why or why not?
2. What more can state government do to ensure housing in Montana is affordable?
3. What is the most effective way state government can reduce property taxes on Montanans? What do you identify as the main catalyst in increased property taxes in Montana?
4. What obligation does the state have in reducing carbon emissions? How would you accomplish this? What do you interpret the state constitution’s provision for clean and healthful environment to mean when it comes to crafting state energy policy?
5. Native Americans in Montana die a generation younger than their white neighbors. What will you do to improve health outcomes in tribal communities?

## Attorney General

1. What are the most effective things to be done within the state of Montana to stem the fentanyl overdose crisis?
2. How much should the state be involved in litigation at the federal level that did not originate in the state of Montana?
3. Indigenous persons make up more than 30% of those missing in Montana but only account for about 6% of the state’s population. How would you work to address this epidemic?
4. How would you work to improve the culture and performance of the Montana Highway Patrol?



THOM BRIDGE, INDEPENDENT RECORD FILE

The Montana State Capitol in Helena.

5. What do you hope to accomplish in your role on the state Land Board?

## Secretary of State

1. How would you use this office to foster trust in our elections and relationships with local elections workers?
2. What can this office do to ease the process of registering a business in Montana?
3. Do you support open primaries in Montana?
4. Are you satisfied with the office’s business fee collection model? If not, how would you change it?
5. What do you hope to accomplish in your role on the state Land Board?

## Montana Senate/House

1. Would you vote to continue Medicaid expansion past 2025?
2. What is the most effective way that state government can reduce property taxes on Montanans?
3. What more can state government do to ensure housing in Montana is affordable? Are subsidies appropriate?
4. How would you ensure you’re communicating with the voters in your district and understand what issues they identify as most important to your district?
5. What are your wildlife management

priorities for the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, and why?

## Superintendent of Public Instruction

1. How would you improve the impact of and accountability to the state’s Indian Education for All program?
2. How would you work to improve teacher recruitment and retention in Montana?
3. The Office of Public Instruction has seen massive turnover over the last four years. What would you do to rebuild the agency?
4. Do you support the expansion of charter schools in Montana?
5. What do you hope to accomplish in your role on the state Land Board?

## Auditor

1. How would you use this office to advocate for consumers in Montana?
2. Where would you focus this office’s investigatory branch?
3. How would you elevate awareness about the resources offered by the state auditor?
4. What policies or laws would you like to see implemented to address the role of pharmacy benefit managers?
5. What do you hope to accomplish in



## MONTANA 2024 PRIMARY ELECTION VOTER GUIDE: STAFF

This 2024 primary election voter guide is a publication of Lee Enterprises, the largest news organization in Montana with more than 50 journalists across newsrooms in Billings, Butte, Hamilton, Helena and Missoula.

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your role on the state Land Board?

## Supreme Court

1. How do you believe your judicial philosophy is distinct from your opponent?
2. How would you work to ensure an independent judiciary and preserve the nonpartisan nature of this election?
3. How would you make the court more accessible and understandable to Montanans?

## Supreme Court Clerk

1. How would you work to ensure an independent judiciary and preserve the nonpartisan nature of this election?
2. How would you make the court more accessible and understandable to Montanans?



## GOVERNOR

### Greg Gianforte – R



**Age:** 62

**Home:** Helena

**Family:** My wife Susan and I have been married since 1988. We have four children, and four grandchildren.

**Occupation:** Governor of Montana

**Education:** Bachelor of Science in engineering, Stevens Institute of Technology; Master of Science in electrical engineering, Stevens Institute of Technology

**Contact information for**

**voters:** Email address: info@gregformontana.com; Mailing address: Greg for Montana, PO Box 877, Helena, MT 59624; Twitter: @GregForMontana; Facebook: @GregForMontana; Website: gregformontana.com

**1.** The safety net of Medicaid should be there for those who truly need it, but it will collapse if all are allowed to climb on it.

During the pandemic, the federal government didn't allow states to verify eligibility for Medicaid, and Medicaid enrollment spiked. Last year, the federal government required states to begin verifying eligibility again. Since then, we've ensured only those who are eligible can participate, and enrollment is back down to pre-pandemic levels.

Medicaid should be a temporary program for most people to help them get back on their feet. We should encourage work and reduce government dependency by requiring able-bodied adults with no dependents, excluding seniors and single parents, to work to receive benefits.

**2.** I understand the cost of living is quickly becoming out of reach for many Montanans. I'm proud of what we've done to address the affordable housing crisis, but there's more to do. Working with legislators and the bipartisan Housing Task Force I launched, we made Montana a national leader, leading the charge

and delivering historic pro-housing reforms that will boost supply and make housing more attainable. Some pro-housing advocates are calling our bipartisan reforms the "Montana Miracle."

Because government cannot spend our way out of the housing crisis, we've emphasized reforms that increase housing supply while protecting our way of life from sprawl.

**3.** Property taxes are too high, and must be reined in. About 85% of property taxes go directly to local jurisdictions, like counties and cities. Unfortunately, some counties have a spending problem, with some growing their spending at three times the rate of inflation. As a result, Montanans have seen their property taxes rise.

Last year, we delivered Montana homeowners with rebates of up to \$1,350, the largest in state history, as well as permanent reforms that save them over \$120 million. These measures completely offset property tax increases for the average Montana homeowner.

For long-term reforms, I support reining in out-of-control county spending and ensuring out-of-staters, who own second homes in Montana, pay their fair share.

**4.** I've been clear: to address our changing climate, we must focus on American innovation and ingenuity, not costly, expansive government mandates that will kill Montana jobs and our economy.

Our nation must have an all-of-the-above energy policy, like Montana does, to become energy independent and secure again. Unfortunately, the Biden administration has put its thumb on the scale, picking winners and losers for energy sources. We haven't, and won't, in Montana.

We must continue to expand energy production, from all sources, to keep pace with rising demand and ensure electricity is affordable and reliable for Montanans. That's what guides my approach to energy policy.

**5.** Working with tribal leaders, we've made significant investments in mobile response units and technical assistance for tribal communities.

After previous governors kicked the

can down the road, we made a historic \$300 million investment to improve the delivery of behavioral health care throughout our state. We're expanding community-based behavioral health care and developmental disabilities services.

Sadly, the fentanyl crisis has disproportionately impacted our tribal communities. Fentanyl seizures have increased by 20,000% since 2019. This crisis has left no community untouched. We must cut off the supply by securing our southern border, where drugs are entering our country with Joe Biden's open border policies.



### Kaiser Leib – L

**Age:** 36

**Home:** Helena

**Family:** Single

**Occupation:** Comedian

**Education:** Bachelor's, Math and Computer

Science, The University of Montana, 2009

**1.** I would not veto such a bill. Healthcare has been damaged by burdensome government regulation. Free market principles are absent even when healthcare is ostensibly "privatized" because price discovery is impossible. But vetoing continued expansion without removing government meddling would not fix the problem.

**2.** State government can back off and leave everyone alone, thereby reducing the costs associated with regulations. State government can eliminate taxes, which make up a huge part of the cost of living.

**3.** The most effective way to reduce property taxes would be to eliminate them. In Montana, taxes are the purview of the legislature, not the governor's office: I would be unable to unilaterally remove taxes, sorry.

That being said, state government has consistently increased the portion of property taxes which are paid by homeowners, far beyond the pace of property value increases. The biggest culprit is the legislature's ongoing

policy of shifting taxes from businesses to homeowners—most recently at the behest of the sitting governor.

**4.** The state should lift restrictions and subsidies which discourage the development of wind, solar, and nuclear power.

"The state and each person shall maintain and improve a clean and healthful environment in Montana for present and future generations" is at odds with Libertarian philosophy. It demands that the state intervene in private affairs and binds "each person" to maintain the environment, so we all violate the constitution every day by using electricity and driving cars. But governors can't just ignore the constitution when they don't like it, and so I would endeavor to comply with the text as written.

**5.** Decisions about Native American health belong to Native Americans. Governments meddle. They make decisions in Washington and in Helena and they have never lived in Browning or Box Elder or Hardin or Lame Deer and neither have I. I do not claim to understand how to improve health outcomes, or the economic and educational outcomes this question buries. It is not for me to say. But I will listen.



### Tanner J. Smith – R

**Age:** 49

**Home:** Lakeside for the last 30 years

**Family:** Five kids and wife Kelly

**Occupation:** Owner of Tanner J. Smith

Construction/Excavation Contractor

**Education:** Graduate Stevensville High School 1993. Somers/Lakeside School Board, Montana House of Representatives

**Contact information for voters:** TannerForMontana.com

**1.** I would not. Medicaid expansion is fiscally unsustainable. We see that at the federal and state level. Medicaid for children and the elderly is needed but people that are able to work need

to work. We are a meritocracy and being in service to others helps our collective social health. Whether it's waiting a table, performing open heart surgery or putting in a water main we all have a calling in life. Every job and career is important.

**2.** If you vote for Democrats this is what happens. I.e. COVID lockdowns, mass migrations, printing money/ inflation, bad energy policies, etc. The state of Montana shouldn't be picking winners and losers when it comes to "affordable housing". Government never solves a problem, it only makes things harder for those that didn't benefit from the perceived solution. There's plenty of money in the private sector to build affordable housing but currently it's just too expensive to build. I know this because I do the excavation for these wealthy developers. Everything in construction runs on Diesel and the current green energy policy from Washington won't allow for cheap inexpensive energy production. Inexpensive energy equals inexpensive housing and durable

goods. As long as oil stays at \$100/ barrel rent will stay at \$1800/room. I am all for the state of Montana issuing tax abatements, lessening the burden of impact fees and cutting regulations to help developers get these projects started. As governor we will make Montana energy dominant, independent and resilient to outside pressures.

**3.** Montana needs to return to responsibly using our natural resources. 30-40 years ago tax proceeds from logging, mining, coal and oil production is what funded our schools. Today that tax burden has shifted to the residential property owner. This shift affects the elderly, renters and folks on fixed incomes the most. 30 years of Democrat Green Policies and Liberal lawsuits have all but destroyed these industries in Montana. That is the reality. A short term fix for property taxes is easy and all of us conservatives tried doing it in the 2023 legislative session. I.e. reset back to 2019 values before the COVID housing market spike. Use acquisition

value for the assessment, what YOU paid for YOUR property is what YOU should be taxed.

The catalyst and reason for the increase in property taxes is the Montana Uni-party consisting of Democrats, RINO's and Greg Gianforte. They don't want the problem fixed... because they want your tax dollars. Gianforte's "Property Tax Task Force" is composed of the same people that wouldn't give taxpayers any substantive relief for the last three years. This can all be fixed by using conservative principles that have worked in the past and that are working in other states. Helena needs a change and I am it.

**4.** The state of Montana has an obligation to leave Montana clean, safe and here for future generations. No one does things faster, cleaner, safer and better than Americans. I will push back on the climate alarmists that think regulating our Montana businesses out of existence somehow saves the environment? The leftists fail to realize that if we don't create our

own things here then they will be done in China, India and elsewhere with much more carbon emissions. I have yet to hear a coherent explanation about how there was twice as much carbon in the atmosphere BEFORE humans walked the earth? Carbon is plant food. I would think the left would want to feed the plants? The carbon emission/credit debate and fear mongering is spearheaded by the same groups that were banning styrofoam cups, counting chlorofluorocarbons and the ozone layer in the 90s. Follow the money.



A clean and healthful environment means just that. We all deserve clean air and clean water for generations to come. As governor my administration will countersue every time a logging sale is stopped by a judge. The forest fires we are experiencing every summer aren't because of climate change, they burn hotter and are more devastating because they haven't been logged or thinned in 40 years. These bad management practices will lead to loss of lives and more structures if

**SHARYL ALLEN**  
**FOR STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**  
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Paid for by Sharyl for State Superintendent – Republican  
Box 6813, Helena MT 59601



**VOTE FOR RAE PEPPERS**  
**FOR SENATE DISTRICT 21**  
**I am hardworking and I will work hard for the people of Montana!**  

Rae is an unwavering advocate for Our Veterans, Farmers and Ranchers and women in Montana. She has passed bills for economic development in Indian Country, Compensation for Tribal Burial Preservation, Missing/ Murdered People, and Veteran Support Bills.

Paid for by Rae Peppers for SD21, PO Box 497, Lame Deer MT 59043 - Democrat







we don't change course. We all have a constitutional right to clean air in July/ August the way it was in the 70's, 80's and 90's. Forests need to be managed just like the garden or landscaping in our yards. If you don't weed and trim things back they will eventually destroy your entire property. With regards to the Held Vs MT case my administration will not be crafting energy policy based on the feelings of 12-18-year-olds that have never signed the front of a check. These reckless actions cost our fellow Montanans jobs. They cost my friends and neighbors their jobs. We can have a safe, clean environment and create jobs and low cost energy at the same time. Wind and solar are part of the solution but the technology isn't quite there yet. Hydro and fossil fuels must remain the key components of our energy policy. I will enact my ORACLE act on week one. Fuel reduction in the forests and low cost electricity from Biomass Incinerators will help all Montanans.

**5** This June 2 is the 100 year anniversary of the American Indian Citizenship Act. In the past 100 years things have only declined for our neighbors on the reservations with the life expectancy of a male native American being 47 years old. Missing indigenous women is a travesty and shouldn't be occurring either. Having a "Sovereign Nation" inside America isn't working. The Reservation system is just like Chicago, Baltimore or New Orleans. The local leadership and local government gets richer and the folks that need the most help never receive it. Pouring more money at this problem isn't, hasn't and won't fix things. Greg vetoed HB 797 which was our attempt in the legislature to see where the Tribal governments are spending the taxpayers dollars...Greg vetoed it? Giving taxpayer dollars to a sovereign entity without any oversight, law enforcement or mechanism of checks and balances is futile. We are seeing that. Like all conservative republicans we don't care what color or creed a person is. We are all Montanans and Americans. My hope is that the Native American people will stand up for themselves, abolish these "sovereign borders", and finally join our American

team. This movement has to originate from the people and when it does my administration will be there to stand shoulder to shoulder with them.

## U.S. SENATE

### Sid Daoud – L



**Age:** 56

**Home:** Kalispell

**Family:** Wife  
KristenMarie, son  
Antranik, son Kaden,  
daughter Cyan

**Occupation:** Senior  
Consultant at Summit7 Systems

**Education:** CMR Graduate and two  
years at MSU

**Contact information for voters:**  
[HTTPS://LibertySid.com](https://libertysid.com); [Sid.Daoud@libertysid.com](mailto:Sid.Daoud@libertysid.com)

**1.** U.S. Fish and Wildlife should filter down the list of Endangered, Threatened and species of concern to State Wildlife managers and have them oversee what programs to put in place. Beyond that U.S. Fish and Wildlife should stay out of our hair unless there is a matter of proven negligence. We know Montana better than Washington does.

**2.** Montana does a great job providing hydro-electric power, but we have to supplement our needs by buying out of state power, especially here on the Western side of the state. Montana should concentrate on safe and sustainable power as well as utilizing the resources we have here in the state, we should look more to Nuclear Power and Coal Power. We should also investigate wood pellet energy, the brush we clear to prevent forest fires can be compressed into pellets and bring an entire new industry to Montana.

**3.** As a veteran I am extremely distrustful of the VA. Although the VA has improved it is still not equal to private paid care. VA medical outcomes should be compared to private practice and pressure should be applied to be comparable until they become so. We signed a contract with our veterans to care for them for life,

this is NOT social welfare, it is fulfilling a contract.

**4.** Compensation should not be set, this lowers compensation for all. The free market should dictate wages. Wages will increase naturally in years where we have extreme forest fires. Additionally, The State of Montana should be given the charge of taking care of not only state but federal forests so that we can responsibly thin them to prevent large scale disasters. Local control surpasses Federal control every time.

**5.** I would give them the opportunity to succeed by giving them the same opportunities that we have. They should own the land on the reservations so that they can leverage it for small business loans and gain the value of improvements to the land. They should be treated as sovereign people and allowed to participate with the United States as much or as little as they desire. Self-reliance is powerful. Stop the generational poverty and government dependence we have forced them into.



### Michael Hummert – D



**Age:** 65

**Home:** Helena since  
1996 after retiring  
From the U.S. Navy

**Family:** Raised in  
southern Illinois with  
my brother and three  
sisters by my father who was a single  
parent since I was 8-years-old. I  
became a single parent two years  
before I retired and finished raising  
my two daughters in Montana. I have  
been happily married for the past 23  
years.

**Occupations:** U.S. Army tank  
Mechanic, concrete construction  
laborer, U.S. Navy Deck Seaman,  
Mess Specialist (Cook), 2nd Class  
Salvage Diver, Marine Mammal  
Operator and Trainer, 1st Class  
Salvage Diver/Salvor, Quartermaster/  
Ships Navigator, Diving Technology  
Instructor/Unlimited Diving  
Operations Supervisor, Post  
Retirement-Montana Highway Patrol,

school bus driver, car salesman, 18  
years as a general house remodeler/  
business owner helping people  
protect their investment. Retired  
again, it is difficult to understand  
the plight of the working class if you  
have not experienced it. Candidate  
for the U.S. Senate; so far totally  
unpaid position.

**Education:** High School, Army  
Technical training, Naval Nuclear  
Weapons Accident Recovery Training,  
Shipboard Fire Fighting Training, 2nd  
Class Dive Training, Marine Mammal  
Behavior Modification Training,  
1st Class Diver/Salvor Training,  
Underwater Demolition Training,  
Adult Instruction Training, Gulf Coast  
College Real-estate Appraiser and  
Agent Course, Gulf Coast College  
Corrections Officer Academy,  
Montana Highway Patrol Academy,  
Montana Life and Health Insurance  
License, Montana Contractor License,  
Lewis and Clark County Septic  
Systems Installation License. I have  
many self-taught vocations such as  
Ships Navigator, Watch Captain of a  
Ships Galley responsible for feeding  
over 700 crewmen three meals a day  
(talk about constituent complaints,  
I had a few). Learned the home  
remodeling industry and the value of  
trust between me and my costumers.  
I always believe a person should  
have a fallback plan.

**Contact information for voters:**  
[mikeformt.com](mailto:mikeformt.com), [mikeformontana.com](mailto:mikeformontana.com),  
[montanaformike@gmail.com](mailto:montanaformike@gmail.com)

**1.** U.S. Fish Wildlife Service falls  
under the Interior Department. It is the  
duty and responsibility of the United  
States Senate to confirm a president's  
Department of Interior appointment  
for secretary. Regardless of the party  
the president belongs to, as a U.S.  
Senator I would not vote to confirm  
any secretary who is unwilling to  
answer direct questions in a forthright  
manner. Currently we have misguided  
laws governing wilderness areas in  
our state. We spend millions of dollars  
establishing wildlife in these areas just  
to watch them die in forest fires. I would  
be a strong advocate for reintroducing  
roads into wilderness areas so we can

battle wildfires appropriately and save  
our endangered species and manage  
our forest.

**2.** Upgrading and fortify our  
electrical grid along with increasing  
production. Reducing the federal  
EPA's Authority over the states. All  
50 states have an EPA that is capable  
of protecting the environment. The  
only time the federal EPA should be  
involved is if one state is impeding  
another state's ability to have clean air  
and water. In the current environment  
of federal overreach and corruption  
it is imperative that states' rights are  
preserved.

**3.** The VA is over burdened with  
administrators and bureaucracy. Fix  
this and it may fix many problems at  
the VA. Since 2000 the budget has  
exploded from \$100 billion to \$335  
billion. This is the unseen cost of our  
country waging war in the Middle East.  
Our debt as a nation is almost \$35  
trillion and it increases by \$1 trillion  
every 100 days. This is Jon Tester's 18-  
year legacy. Can your children's future  
survive another six years of Tester?  
This is what Jon Tester is responsible  
for, and you cannot expect it to be  
fixed by the people that caused it.  
Unlike Tester, I support a balanced  
budget amendment.

**4.** This is another area that the  
federal government should block  
grant funds to the states and let them  
manage their interior. The state should  
set the wage based on local needs and  
availability. The land is owned by the  
federal government, but it lies within  
the interior of our state and we the  
people of Montana should have more  
dominion over that land. I trust the  
people managing our state wildlands  
far more than I trust the federal  
government. The future of our country  
must include streamlining agencies  
to cut cost. Aggressive Forestry  
management is the answer to forest  
fires. It may be their land but it's our  
air that they pollute when it burns.

**5.** The answer may be as simple  
as quit isolating them. They are  
American citizens with all the  
rights and privileges including self-  
determination. The reservation is an  
invention of the 1800s. We are now  
in the 21st-century. It's time to stop



telling them they are victims. I doubt their health outcome is any different than any other American that lives in a city or a small town. Having gainful employment, living in a culture of family and friends, refraining from alcohol and tobacco while maintaining a reasonable weight will probably solve any problems they have. It's obvious that government intervention is not the answer. If it were the answer, the problem would have been fixed decades ago, after all we are talking about their very existence.



### Jon Tester – D

**Age:** 67

**Home:** Big Sandy

**Family:** I first asked my wife Sharla on a date when she struck me out during a game of softball at a youth

barbecue. We got married during my senior year of college. Sharla and I have three children: our daughter Christine, our son Shon, and Melody, a close friend of Christine's who we were blessed to welcome to our house years later. We also have five wonderful grandchildren who we are very proud of.

**Occupation:** Dirt farmer and U.S. Senator

**Education:** College of Great Falls, Bachelor of Science in Music

**Contact information for voters:**  
jontester.com

**1.** When managing the wild spaces and habitats that make Montana the Last Best Place, we need science-based solutions. Over the years, I've made sure Montanans, scientists and local Montana wildlife experts have a seat at the table in D.C. to make sure the Endangered Species Act works for Montana, and that's what I'll continue to do.

**2.** America is stronger when we are energy independent, plain and simple. We've set record highs for natural gas and crude oil production over the last year, and we need to continue on that track. But we have more work to

do to lower costs, because massive multinational corporations and foreign countries like Saudi Arabia and Iran are taking advantage of customers by jacking up prices. That is why I supported common sense projects like the Keystone XL Pipeline. Montana also has the opportunity to create jobs by being a leader in renewable energy resources. We should invest directly in Montana companies researching innovative ways to produce next-generation energy technologies that are affordable and lower costs for consumers.

**3.** As Chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, I've always believed that we need to take care of our veterans when they come home – and if we can't do that, we shouldn't send them off to war to begin with. That's why I've successfully pushed for more doctors, nurses, and health care personnel, and for the VA to open new and better clinics across the state. We also fought hard to make sure we righted a generational wrong with the passage of my PACT Act, which finally expanded care to toxic-exposed veterans, including thousands in Montana. But we have more work to do, and I'll keep fighting to cut red tape at the Department and ensure our veterans get the care and benefits they've earned.

**4.** Unfortunately, due to extreme weather events, fire season in Montana is longer and more intense. It's critically important that the wildland firefighters who put their lives on the line are fairly compensated for the work they do to protect our Montana communities. My Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill secured pay increases for wildland firefighters, and I am fighting to make these pay increases permanent. I'm working to pass the bipartisan Wildland Firefighter Paycheck Protection Act and my Wildland Firefighter Fair Pay Act, which would ensure our wildland firefighters have reliable and competitive pay and are fairly compensated for their overtime work.

**5.** As long as I'm in the Senate, Tribal Nations in Montana will have a partner and a seat at the table. It is critical that everyone, including Native Americans, have access to affordable

health care regardless of where they live. That is why I have pushed for solutions to address the shortage of medical professionals in rural Montana through my bipartisan Rural Physician Workforce Production Act. I will continue to work with Tribal leaders to fulfill our trust responsibilities and make crucial investments in housing and public education. Finally, we need to deliver the resources and tools to law enforcement to tackle an ongoing fentanyl crisis that impacts all of Montana.

### ATTORNEY GENERAL

### Ben Alke – D

**Age:** 45

**Home:** Grew up in Helena and lives in Bozeman

**Family:** Husband and father of four children

**Occupation:** Attorney  
– Crist, Krogh, Alke & Nord, PLLC.

**Education:** Helena Capital High School; University of Notre Dame, BA, Northwestern University School of Law, JD.

**Contact information for voters:**  
ben@alkeformontana.com

**1.** The Attorney General needs to provide more support to local prosecutors and law enforcement. Prosecuting felonies and getting drug dealers off the street is law enforcement **101**. Unfortunately, the current Attorney General is not doing his job and crime is up.

The exact type of support depends on the county. To provide just two examples, the State is not prosecuting felonies in Lake County on the Flathead Reservation. That creates a law enforcement vacuum where cartels and other drug dealers can operate. In Yellowstone County, the Attorney General needs to support efforts to expand the county jail capacity to get drug dealers off the streets.

Law enforcement is a complex collaboration between federal, state, tribal, and local agencies. It's about working together and getting stuff

done – not about press releases.

**2.** Not much. The Attorney General should participate in litigation outside Montana when participating will actually make a difference to Montanans. The tobacco litigation and opioid cases from years ago are good examples. The State had to participate in those cases to recover money for Montanans.

Most litigation at the federal level does not work that way. When 25 attorneys general file suit against the federal government, it's probably just a political stunt and waste of resources for 24 of them.

The Attorney General is the attorney for the people of the State of Montana. He should represent their interests, not the interests of any political party. Put politics on the backburner and just focus on doing the job for the people of Montana.

**3.** By making the reporting and investigation of missing indigenous persons a top priority. Because the State does not have jurisdiction on any reservation (except the Flathead Reservation), communication and collaboration are critical. The Attorney General must play a leadership role by engaging with tribal leadership and tribal, federal and local law enforcement. Creating a reporting system, establishing a communication network, and tracking data on missing indigenous persons would all be steps in the right direction, but even more needs to be done. The Attorney General must also explore ways to effectively coordinate active investigations with other law enforcement agencies and be more proactive when fighting human trafficking.

**4.** By sticking to the core mission of the Montana Highway Patrol and removing all politics and favoritism. There is nothing political about administering the Highway Patrol. Troopers need to know that employment decisions will be based on hard work and merit, that they will be provided with proper training, and that leadership will listen to their suggestions and concerns and respond.

I will also implement the recommendations of a recent employee survey of the Montana Highway Patrol that revealed a lack of trust



in the Attorney General's leadership. Unfortunately, rather than embrace the results and recommendations of this project, the current Attorney General cancelled the program and ordered that all copies of the results of the survey be destroyed.

5. Increased funding for education and increased access to public lands. State owned lands are held in trust for the support of education and for the benefit of all Montanans. My votes on the Land Board will be consistent with the mission of the board and the rights of Montanans, including access to public lands and waterways for hunting, fishing and recreation.

SECRETARY OF STATE

Christi Jacobsen – R



**Age:** 48  
**Home:** Born and raised in Helena  
**Family:** Husband and five children  
**Occupation:** Secretary

of State  
**Education:** Capital High School, Helena, BA Carroll College, Helena, Master's Public Administration, Missoula

**Contact information for voters:**  
info@christijacobsen.com

1. My administration has developed the strongest relationship with county partners in decades. That is what the county election officials survey information reported to the legislature last month said, and we've worked hard and delivered for Montana by building a united Montana Elections Team. From personal visits by myself and members of the team to courthouses around the state to focus on the uniqueness of each community, to a world class elections training, and unprecedented outreach to voters—the Montana Elections Team is working with momentum because of our intentional efforts to ensure Montana's elections set the national bar.

2. As Secretary of State, I led and streamlined unprecedented reform and registered a historic number of

businesses in the state. Now, filings are completely electronic, filed 24/7, from any device—while providing exceptional customer service to the business community. I've successfully cut red tape, including eliminating unnecessary bureaucratic processes and fees from the office, reducing the steps involved for every business filing, and massively expedited the process for our customers, turning them around at record speed. Most importantly, through hard work, we've cut fees for Montana businesses in half and waived annual fees.

3. Montana is a red state that is adamant about limited government, while also fiercely independent. Most Montanans I talk to enjoy not having to register by party. At the same time, I feel for those who are upset by the political warfare played through crossover gamesmanship. When it comes to evaluating primary policy proposals, the devil is always in the details, and I would have to thoroughly review what is proposed to make a decision. Most Montanans enjoy our current system, but I recognize that there are instances

where it is abused unfairly.  
4. The Secretary of State's Office operates as an enterprise fund. No taxpayer dollars are used for funding. The office is run like a business, efficiently, doing more with less by providing exceptional service to the Montana business community. As your Secretary of State, I have cut new business filing fees in half, waived annual report filing fees, eliminated numerous bureaucratic fees all together, and intend to continue to look for opportunities to further reduce fees. The number of employees in the office has been reduced by half, while providing exceptional service. The business community grades my performance an "A+".

5. Managing our state lands is near and dear to my heart because my family is a product of public schools and public land users. I fight for public access, properly funding our schools, responsible development of our natural resources, and protecting private property rights. I am proud of my work with timber and agriculture industries to protect our way of life. I have delivered



VOTE KYLE AUSTIN  
FOR CONGRESS

United we stand United we can!

**HEALTHCARE** – As a Pharmacist for over 15 years I have the experience necessary to fix our healthcare system for Montana.

**AGRICULTURE** – Born & raised on my Grandfather's farm & later owning & operating a farm of my own. I have the experience to support our Montana farmers and ranchers.

**BUSINESS OWNER** – As a small business owner, I understand the struggles & challenges. I understand why we need less government oversight.

Learn more at: [austin4mt.com](http://austin4mt.com)

Paid for by Austin4Congress; Republican

by creating hundreds of thousands of new public land acres to recreate on, delivered access to landlocked lands for backcountry hunters, and prime fishing access locations for generations to enjoy God's beauty in this state.



### Jesse James Mullen – D



**Age:** 39

**Home:** Deer Lodge

**Family:** Married, 4 daughters, 1 son

**Occupation:**  
Newspaperman

**Education:** Studied at the University of Wyoming

**Contact information for voters:**  
jessejamesmullen.com

**1.** The credibility of our elections is being undermined by the current Secretary of State playing political games and fundraising on misinformation and fake news. Republican and Democrat election officials across Montana run the most secure elections in America. My opponent knowingly used public money to distribute fake voting information in 2022. She tries to limit voter access and disenfranchise Montana's youth and Tribes by promoting unconstitutional bills from the legislature. I spent my career holding politicians accountable to the truth. I will continue to prioritize accurate and timely information and highlight the achievements of Montana's dedicated local officials.

**2.** High-level customer service is a necessity. I built customer-oriented centers for some of the largest media companies in the US. State employees must be capable, competent, and accessible to the public whenever they are needed. We must work for Montana's small-business owners, not just the out-of-state-owned mega-corporations and tech millionaires registering Lamborghinis and RVs while dodging California taxes. I don't want special rules for small businesses; I want a registration process that works and a realization from our officials that Montana's locally-owned businesses are the backbone of Main Street.

**3.** Like most Montanans, I vote for

the person, not the party. Partisan candidates must be accountable to all Montanans if they want to use public resources for ballot access. Let's give Montanans a real choice in primary elections and weed out the extremist politicians. Independents are the fastest-growing segment of the voter population, and partisans shouldn't have special rules while forcing the rest of Montana to join an organization they don't support. Yes, I support open primaries. Frankly, if both party executive directors are against open primaries, that's a good argument in favor.

**4.** Our current Secretary of State overcharged Montana businesses and refused to issue refunds unless Montanans navigated a complicated red tape process. Businesses had to sue to fix a known issue that her department ignored, costing Montanans money. The public shouldn't have to pay to defend an executive who refuses to do the job. The public must be put first. That means better information for our small business owners and support from the Secretary of State's office to allow them to file without hiring expensive third-party organizations. And plain and simple, some people still like to pay by check.

**5.** I spent my career holding politicians accountable. Our public land is Montana's greatest investment, and I take the caretaker role for our land seriously. I will hold the Land Board accountable to Montanans and be a critical check and balance for a partisan board more interested in pleasing donors and lobbyists than protecting Montana's future. I'm not running for Secretary of State to work for the Governor or lobbyists. I'm running to serve as a caretaker for our public lands for the public and future generations.

### Superintendent of Public Instruction

### Sharyl Allen – R

**Age:** 64

**Home:** Helena

**Family:** Lots of nieces and nephews, eight siblings still living, adult daughter



**Education:** BS Education - Western Montana, MBA - Northern AZ University, Certification work in Ed. Leadership - Northern AZ University, Urban Superintendent Credential - Georgetown University

**Contact information for voters:**  
sharyl2024@gmail.com

**1.** Meet with the elders and knowledge keepers in consultative circles, seeking their wisdom and guidance on improving IEFA's impact. Begin every workshop and gathering with knowledge keeper stories and wisdom being shared. Expand the "Youth Rising" project, led by tribal students. Utilize the OPI data communications team to capture stories of tribal land and share the resource with our Montana schools. Accountability is a natural outcome of implementing opportunities like those described above because it immediately impacts the curriculum and how IEFA integrates into student learning.

**2.** Here are the top three:

Continue to build out the teacher residency project, one of my innovations, while at the OPI. It was done with crucial stakeholder representations. This project builds new teacher capacity so they are ready to teach on Day 1 in their classroom.

Work with legislators to create a statewide, funded salary schedule that ensures minimum and maximum salaries for teachers.

Implement a statewide campaign, "Why I'm a Teacher," to build interest in teaching and increase value for great teachers across our state.

**3.** My team and I are visiting with folks who have left the OPI with an invitation to rejoin the staff when I am elected State Superintendent.

Develop a culture of confidence in the competence of each employee.

Visit the 200 OPI employees and hold listening sessions with them to identify needed improvement.

Review every position identifying the skills and attributes needed to recruit excellent "fits".

Go through the process with State HR to ensure the OPI compensation schedule is competitive.

Network with Montana educators and encourage them to apply at the OPI.

**4.** First, I am a big supporter of excellent public schools in Montana and getting the what of learning and the how of practical impact on student learning, addressed through ensuring our Montana Constitutional promise is fulfilled for each Montana student: "Build an educational system that fulfills the full education potential of each person."

Under my leadership, we will focus on keeping this Montana Constitution promise to each student rather than expanding charter schools. Montana needs to keep its promises to kids.

**5.** Effectively maximize the use of state lands to bring revenue to our public schools.

Identify ways that state lands might be used to address the lack of teacher housing in far too many Montana school districts.

Be a good steward of the State Lands and the purpose of state lands.



### Susie Hedalen – R

**Age:** 40

**Home:** Townsend

**Family:** Married to my husband Derrick

**Occupation:**  
Superintendent of Townsend School District



District

**Education:** I graduated from Montana State University, Bozeman, with a Bachelor's in Elementary Education, a Master's in Educational Leadership, and a Certificate in Native American Studies.

**Contact information for voters:**  
info@susieforschools.com

**1.** Montana's constitution mandates Indian Education for All (IEFA), setting our public education apart. Alongside my teaching and administrative credentials, I hold a Native American Studies certificate and liaison for the Montana Advisory Council on Indian Education. It's vital all Montana students grasp



our tribal nations’ cultural depth. As State Superintendent, I’ll infuse tribal history into civics education, collaborating with tribal leaders and offering educator training integrating IEFA across the curriculum. Honoring this mandate fosters inclusivity and awareness in Montana’s classrooms. Fiscal reporting will monitor funding for high-quality Indian Education materials and professional development. As State Superintendent, I ensure OPI supports districts in the tribal consultation process.

**2.** Montana struggles with a

pressing teacher shortage, impacting communities statewide. Addressing this crisis demands multifaceted strategies to bolster educators and incentivize youths toward teaching careers. Building upon initiatives like the TEACH Act, which enhances starting teacher salaries, and the educator healthcare trust program, we can improve retention and recruitment.

Collaborating with the Montana University System to recruit students into education and mental health professions is essential. Streamlining administrative processes in education

redirects resources to classrooms. Advocating for federal authorities to ease unnecessary mandates empowers educators. As State Superintendent, I’ll champion these efforts to ensure quality education reaches every Montana community.

**3.** As an experienced administrator, I understand that no organization can be effectively run without appropriate staffing levels of highly qualified professionals. State government is no different. In order to effectively serve Montana’s educators and families, the Office of Public Instruction needs

to have experienced individuals who are committed to serving our local communities, schools, and parents. In addition to building the OPI with strong employees, I will work to strategically reduce red tape and bureaucracy while streamlining agency functions. This will allow the OPI to focus on serving local communities. I am committed to responsive constituent services and proactive agency operations to improve response times, support educator professional development, and drive greater focus on academic achievement for students.



**4.** Last year, the Legislature approved public charter schools in Montana, a pivotal move for educational advancement. As a Board of Public Education member, I advocated for 19 top-tier charter schools statewide, many set to open this fall. Montana now aligns with 45 states in broadening school choice within public education through these pioneering institutions.

Montana's charter schools enrich our public education landscape, offering varied options. By expanding choices, we fulfill our constitutional mandate to tailor education to each student. I'm dedicated to collaborating with state leaders to vary academic opportunities, ensuring Montana students access innovative pathways for their fullest potential.

**5.** Our state trust lands exist to ensure robust returns to support our local schools. As a Land Board member, I will prioritize active management of our state trust lands to maximize revenue for schools while also maximizing public access to our state lands for recreational activities. State Trust lands produce about \$50 million each year in school funding through agriculture, oil, gas, forestry, minerals, and real estate. We can expand public access and provide strong returns for our local schools by ensuring proactive management of these areas.



### Shannon O'Brien – D



**Age:** 55

**Home:** Missoula

**Family:** Husband Chuck, son Carter, high school freshman

**Occupation:** Retired Educator

**Education:** Bachelor's, Political Science, UW, Master's Gonzaga, Doctorate, UM

**Contact information for voters:** campaign@montanansforshannon.com

**1.** In keeping with our constitutional obligation, I would ensure the goal of Indian Education for All is met –

that every Montana student learns an accurate history that includes Native people, understands tribal sovereignty, and is aware of contemporary Native issues. IEFA funding should be used for these purposes and OPI can ensure accountability for those dollars through school finance reporting systems. That said, my emphasis would be on impact, not paperwork. OPI should provide the professional development, curricular resources, and encouragement that help the professionals implementing IEFA programming actively engage teachers and students in elevating Native history and culture.

**2.** We need to meet this crisis head-on by addressing the issues driving Montana teachers out of state or into another profession. To start, we must ensure Montana teachers earn a living wage. We must encourage and help replicate creative local efforts to provide affordable teacher housing. Beyond that, we need to lift up teaching as a profession. Working with the Montana University System, we must ensure students heading off to college see teaching as a viable career path and have financial incentives to pursue it. Once in the classroom, teachers should see OPI as the valuable resource it once was.

**3.** An independent audit of the financial and programmatic situation at OPI would identify major gaps and suggest triage priorities, but the complaint I hear repeatedly from school districts is the need to be responsive. Not answering the phone or getting back to people is unacceptable. Under my leadership OPI will be responsive. I'm committed to building a culture of service and restoring the pride we all once had in that office. Working with educators, community leaders, business owners and universities over the last 12 years, I know Montana has an abundance of talent that can be tapped to rebuild OPI.

**4.** We have a responsibility to our taxpayers to spend their money effectively and transparently. The PUBLIC charter schools are showing great promise and innovation in both areas. The PRIVATE charter schools, however, with limited oversight and no

obligation to meet public expectations, are unconstitutional. We cannot dedicate precious resources to private education for a select few. Montanans love their local school and they trust their teachers. We can and we must fund public education adequately to provide a free, quality public education for every Montana child.

**5.** Simply put, we must protect our public lands. Because the revenue generated from our public lands helps fund public schools, the Superintendent's role on the Land Board is especially important. As a Land Board member, I will vote to protect public access and make sure that leases of public lands are fair and equitable to both the state and the people leasing the land, while providing optimal support for public education. I will never support the sale of Montana's public lands.

### STATE AUDITOR

#### James Brown – R



**Age:** 53

**Home:** Dillon

**Family:** Two brothers and a sister and my dog "Lola".

**Occupation:** Attorney and President of the Public Service Commission

**Education:** I grew up in Dillon and attended Beaverhead County High School before attending and graduating from the University of Montana – Missoula. I earned my law degree from Seattle University School of Law and my Master's degree in tax law from the University of Washington.

**Contact information for voters:** Jim@jamesbrownformontana.com

**1.** The Auditor's Office is given broad consumer protection duties. This includes rate review and approval, as well as keeping a watchful eye on the insurance companies operating in the Treasure state. As your next Auditor, I will focus my efforts on ensuring that Montana remains an affordable place to live, to raise a family and to retire.

In this vein, I have zero tolerance for those who violate the law or attempt to financially abuse Montana's senior citizens. I will zealously defend all Montana consumers, especially our vulnerable seniors, from the fraudsters and scammers who would seek to prey on them.

**2.** Once elected, I will focus the agency's investigatory branch on the securities sector in order to protect against bad actors. More needs to be done to shield Montana's most vulnerable citizens from the pervasive and exploding use of artificial intelligence to commit fraud.

**3.** Having grown up in rural Montana, I know how difficult it can be for Montana citizens to access resources offered by state agencies located in Helena. Therefore, I will continue the education efforts undertaken by the agency to get out and into to Montana's local communities, visit with stakeholders directly, and to be accessible on a one-on-one basis to all Montanans regardless of where they reside – from Alzada to Libby – such that rural areas are well represented. I will also strive to provide resources to Montana businesses to find investors to grow their companies and to employ more Montanans.

**4.** The 2021 Montana Legislature passed legislation, namely the Montana Pharmacy Benefit Manager Oversight Act, to provide the auditor's office greater regulatory authority over PBM professionals. Such authority includes requiring pharmacy benefit managers to be Montana licensed, as well as requiring PBM transparency reports to be filed with the office. These are critical consumer transparency steps and will help to ensure customers have access to affordable drug pricing. Having grown up in a small Montana town, I also understand how important it is to maintain access to critical health care access, such as access to a local, independent pharmacist.

**5.** Coming from a multi-generational Montana agriculture family, I will use my voice on this important board to express the interests of rural Montanans. As a backcountry outdoorsman, I have a deep appreciation for Montana's public



lands and will work collaboratively to protect the historic Montana conservation practices of multiple use and sustainability. Having been educated at Montana schools, I will optimize the use of state trust lands to bolster funding for public education, to promote proper stewardship of critical properties so all Montanans benefit, particularly those who earn their livelihood from working the land, and to protect private property interests.



### John Jay Willoughby – R

**Age:** 63

**Home:** Winston, Montana

**Family:** Married with three grown children and six grandchildren

**Occupation:** Owner

and CEO of Willoughby Insurance Services LLC

**Education:** High school graduate, North Dakota; Peace Officers Academy graduate; attended NDSU but did not graduate

**Contact information for voters:**  
willoughbyforauditor@gmail.com

**1.** The Auditors Office has been a political stepping stone for the past 25 years. I'm not a politician nor do I have any desire politically outside of this office. I bring 25 years of experience in the insurance industry to this office unlike any of those currently in the office or others running for this office. I know the struggles Montanans are facing with rising premiums and lack of available options and carriers. My goal is to bring more quality carriers to Montana and be vigilant on what rate increases we allow and negotiate with those insurance carriers.

**2.** I don't believe we can have a narrow focus in our investigative branch. I do believe it is an area lacking within the Auditors Office based on the case loads that I have seen for the investigators. I'd like to see more investigators with a broader focus on fraudulent practices not only by bad actors in state but by those who are focusing on our elderly

and all Montanans via the internet and telephone. This would be my primary focus as well as actively pursuing any and all complaints that are brought to our office.

**3.** I think education and communication are key components to providing awareness of what the Auditors Office has to offer our citizens. I would do this through public information networks via electronic means, social media, radio and television. I'm also a huge proponent of providing not only awareness but educational classes to all corners of our state some of which is currently taking place, but I believe it needs to be further enhanced to make sure all areas of Montana have an opportunity to participate in our classes and provide valuable feedback to help us improve the product we are providing.

**4.** My role as Auditor is to make sure that all Montana citizens have the opportunity for the best possible pricing available on all medications. I believe we have made it to difficult for Pharmacy Benefit Managers to actively provide their services to obtain the best rates for Montanans, but I want to see the hometown pharmacy be able to offer the same rates as the box stores and out of state providers. We need to review the laws we have in place to make sure it's a level playing field for all those concerned. Then we can look at how we can improve it.

**5.** I would hope we can be better stewards of our state lands making sure we not Only protect them but enhance them so they can provide the maximum revenue Possible for our school systems and other agencies those funds are allocated.

### U.S. REPRESENTATIVE, 2ND CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

### Kyle Austin – R

**Age:** 41

**Home:** Billings and Havre

**Occupation:** Pharmacist and farmer

**Education:** Doctorate of Pharmacy, General



Aviation

**Contact information for voters:**  
austin4mt.com

**1.** As a Montana native and future representative for the state of Montana, my goal would be to consolidate resources to make our government more cost effective and cost efficient to lower our national debt and tax burdens. I would remove the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service from all states and allow the states to be responsible for all the Fish and Wildlife Services on state and federal lands.

**2.** As Montana's representative, I would direct energy investments back into hydroelectricity. We need more dams and reservoirs to retain water in our state as our climate changes. Hydroelectric energy is clean and will be a win win for our economy, agriculture, and lifestyle here in Montana for future generations to come.

**3.** My top priority is to pass my "United States Health Plan Corporation" Bill. This bill will eliminate the broken VA system, will eliminate the hassles our Veterans endure, and allow our veterans to have a health plan to utilize the physician of their choice and a pharmacy of their choice.

**4.** As any expense, congress needs to figure out a budget, where is the money coming from and how much can we generate. As a congressman, we need to focus on lowering our national debt and lowering taxes for everyone. We need to start being creative on how our federal government generates income without generating higher taxes. I would like to see higher federal park fees for non-US citizens, I would also like to see boarder entrance toll fees charged to non-US citizens entering the United States by land, air or sea. These funds can be used to help pay for our boarder security as well as wildfires.

**5.** Tribal leaders need to stand up and take the lead on tribal lands to promote health and wellness. Throwing money at any problem is not a solution. The federal government should however help support tribal initiatives to build self-sustainable economic growth so the tribes can be

independent and sovereign.



### Ken Bogner – R

**Age:** 37

**Home:** Miles City

**Family:** Engaged

**Occupation:** Montana Senator

**Education:** Columbia



University

**Contact information for voters:**  
Facebook: Ken Bogner for Congress  
Website: kenbogner.com

- 1.** By delisting the grizzly bear.
- 2.** I will direct them to the most reliable options, and that is what we have in Montana – oil, gas, and coal.
- 3.** We can hold the VA accountable, and all other government agencies, by making the firing process easier for federal employees who don't do their jobs. As a military veteran who uses the VA, I have personal experiences with its failures and the thing that must be improved first is the customer service of the VA, making it easier for veterans to communicate with VAs.
- 4.** I would like to see it set based off the free market rate.
- 5.** Reform BIA and FBI resources to focus on drug enforcement operations. This includes increasing the penalties for fentanyl traffickers.



### Ming Cabrera – D

**Age:** 65

**Home:** Billings

**Family:** Married with two children; wife—Digna aged 60; two children—Stephanie 34, MJ 37;

two grandchildren 4 years, Lyla and Damian

**Education:** BS in Biology, two years School of Medicine

**Contact information for voters:**  
www.mingformontana.com; ming@mingforcongress.com

- 1.** The jurisdictional conflicts between

State and Federal Officials regarding Endangered Species, particularly those located on private lands, have been ongoing. In response, the Interior Department has implemented rules aimed at encouraging landowner participation in voluntary conservation programs. An ambitious goal has been set to restore at least 30 percent of land and water by 2030, achievable through the reduction of time and cost associated with developing and negotiating permit applications. However, cooperation between state, federal, and tribal entities has been marred by jurisdictional conflicts. Improving these relations requires streamlining permit processes and encouraging volunteer participation, to foster better communication.

**2.** We must utilize the resources of solar and wind power. Also, diversify our energy portfolio to protect our environment but ensure economic prosperity. Unfortunately, coal faces economic challenges as the demand diminishes. We must ensure that Eastern Montana, is allowed to enjoy the same benefits of a diverse energy investment portfolio without putting all our eggs in just one basket is risky and vulnerable to economic downturns and market fluctuations. By embracing a diversified approach to energy investment, we can create jobs, stimulate economic growth, and safeguard our environment for future generations – without destroying the coal communities.

**3.** A significant number of veterans reside in rural areas, far from accessible healthcare facilities. Ensuring access to essential services for these veterans is a high priority, that means that transportation options for health checkups be maintained – particularly in areas where clinics are scarce. Additionally, the utilization of teleconferencing for mental health consultations remains a cornerstone of veteran care services. To uphold accountability and enhance patient care, ongoing patient surveys and an emphasis on follow-up after appointments is necessary. These are just a few straightforward solutions that will help ensure that our veterans receive the quality care they deserve.

**4.** We must ensure a pay increase for our wildland firefighters. A bill proposed enjoys bipartisan support but faces scrutiny in the 2024-2025 budget. Every summer, a significant impact of wildfires, leads to hazardous air conditions. The need to advocate for these essential emergency workers, among the lowest paid, despite their crucial role in protecting our land resources. The average pay for wildland firefighters is less than twenty dollars per hour, for such an important and dangerous service. Securing improved funding in the budget is essential, rather than relying on temporary line-item earmarked solutions.

**5.** My past career in hospital settings on reservations, I witnessed a concerning trend; the utilization of lower quality prescription products compared to other public health facilities. It is time to end the government's neglect of tribal communities, and demand proactive engagement and resource allocation. Montana is home to seven reservations, with distinct issues in mental health and addiction. I know my ties with tribal communities make me the right person for the job. Drawing upon my experience working with the IHS, I am committed to bringing my expertise to Washington to advocate and address these critical healthcare needs.



### Troy Downing – R

**Age:** 57

**Home:** Helena

**Family:** Troy and his wife Heather have four grown children



**Occupation:** Montana Commissioner of Securities and Insurance

**Education:** New York University

**Contact information for voters:** Info@troydowning.com or www.TroyDowning.com

**1.** Protection of property rights is paramount to me in any debate around ESA. The federal government is already too intrusive, and any further actions

infringe on Montanans' freedoms. Any conversation about conservation must balance our state's energy needs, the interests of hunters, anglers, ranchers, farmers, and natural resource producers. The federal government must apply science when putting something on or taking something off of the endangered species list. Once we get to the target population, we need to re-evaluate. If a species is no longer in danger, we need to remove these restrictions. A prime example of not using science to delist is the increased negative encounters of humans and grizzly bears we are seeing in and around Montana.

**2.** Montana is an energy and natural resource state. We need to continue to develop and unleash the full potential of our natural resources such as coal, oil, and natural gas to provide reliable and sustainable energy for Montana families. Montana should continue to be a net energy exporter. The unintended consequences of stifling our energy sector is to harm those most vulnerable. Montana families depend on heat and transportation. Affordable energy is paramount and pricing the vulnerable out of these basics can and should be avoided. Energy independence is also a National Security issue. Two high priorities for me are energy security and food security. We produce both in Montana. Additionally, the Montana energy sector creates high-paying jobs. In terms of alternatives, we should always promote innovation, but allow the markets to decide. Traditional energy will continue to drive our economy, heat our homes, and fuel our cars.

**3.** Montana's Veterans deserve the best care possible. As a fellow veteran, I always stand up for agency accountability and will work to fight the bureaucracy that it has become. These brave men and women who stepped up to serve deserve the best quality care, the most options, and the transparency demanded.

**4.** We must actively protect our wildlands from fire by being willing to implement strategic logging operations that are proven to lower the chances and severity of wildland

fires. Secondly, to help pay the men and women who do need to be on the ground when the fires arise, I am open to closely looking at how the federal government can reallocate funds from non-essential government programs and work to implement cost-saving measures within existing agencies as well as explore public-private partnerships to support firefighting efforts.

**5.** Our U.S. Southern Border is wide open, and as a result, drugs continue to pour into our country and are harming these tribal communities. Fentanyl deaths continue to rise. This crisis is preventable, but Joe Biden refuses to close our border. This is my top priority when I am elected. I have been proud of the work that my current office has done with our tribal communities and will continue that work when in congress.



### John B Driscoll – D

**Age:** 77

**Home:** 30 S. Davis St., Helena, MT 59601

**Family:** Wife, Kathryn; four children and six grandchildren

**Occupation:** Retired



**Education:** Sacred Heart Grade School, Miles City; Hamilton High School, Hamilton; BA-Gonzaga University, Spokane; MIA-Columbia University School of International Affairs, New York, New York; Certificate, Columbia University Latin American Institute, New York, New York; MPA-Harvard University Kennedy School of Government, Cambridge, Massachusetts; MBA-University of Montana, Graduate School of Business, Missoula

**Contact information for voters:** driscolljohn37@gmail.com

**1.** The Endangered Species Act (ESA) keeps alive critters that serve as canaries in our collective coal mine. Since grizzlies, wolves, sage grouse and such don't get a vote, I'll serve as their Congress Person, all the time assuming that federal and state



wildlife managers are making good faith efforts to have dialogue with each other, concerning essential habitat.

**2.** Federal investment in all forms of distributed renewable energy generation and storage needs encouragement. To make our electricity system operate at maximum reliability and lowest cost requires a “spinning reserve.” This is quickly addable generating capacity for following additional electricity loads as day turns to night, summer turns to winter, rains turns to drought, and winds turn to calms. Spinning reserve provided by fossil-fueled plants must be phased out and replaced where appropriate with spinning reserve from modular nuclear plants installed using the Nuclear Power Advancement Act.

**3.** I feel fortunate to have the Veteran’s Administration as my primary source of health care and was never impressed by ungrateful whiners during my time in military service. By the same token I’ve learned to keep a watchful eye out for the quiet folks who rarely complain or usually place others’ needs before their own. I am thankful for all that I’ve been given by this country in return for my military service, and when I hear a complaint I’ll consider the source before making maximum effort to correct the problem.

**4.** I will support a special base rate and premium pay for wild land firefighters, because we need the seasoned ones for longer and we need to recruit more new ones of good quality. They have to be paid a competitive wage for obvious reasons. The 5-year average annual cost of wild land firefighting for the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Interior has risen to \$3 billion from the 10 year average cost of \$2.5 billion. The money will have to come from a fire protection fee on stumpage, ground leases and recreational users of forests.

**5.** Indian Health Service hospitals, clinics and stations, and urban clinics, must attract and retain doctors while increasing cultural sensitivity training. These services, including transportation to specialty care in

urban areas, need five times their current level of funding. Recent removal of over 129,000 Montanans from Medicaid has disproportionately impacted the health of poor Native Americans. Today’s native leaders are bringing nutritional indigenous foods back into Native American diets to address food deserts, substance abuse, and heart disease and diabetes. Suicide prevention remains the responsibility of all communities.



### Steve Held – D



**Age:** 63

**Home:** Broadus

**Family:** Married with two children

**Occupation:** Fourth generation rancher and businessman

**Education:** Rocky Mountain College and San Diego State for undergrad. American Conservatory Theater for graduate school.

**Contact information for voters:** [www.MontanaHeld.org](http://www.MontanaHeld.org); Mailing: PO Box 3, Broadus, MT 59317; Email: [info@montanaheld.org](mailto:info@montanaheld.org)

**1.** Federal agencies need to do a better job of customer service across the board. As someone running a business, that’s common-sense. It’s hard to understand decisions when no one answers the phone. Let’s get back to serving people, not just special interests. No one wants to see wildlife go extinct – work with states to get ahead of a listing, and return management back when they’ve recovered. I’m a defender of the North American Wildlife Management Model. State management agencies are on the ground, familiar with communities, and understand the dynamics of balancing management with those who work the land.

**2.** We have a unique opportunity to rapidly advance energy freedom. By producing our own energy, we break free from the out-of-state corporate utilities who are jacking up our rates to maximize profits for shareholders and Wall Street freeloaders. We can also

transition outdated energy production to new and more reliable sources that will create good-paying jobs. One of my top priorities would be supporting the community of Colstrip and advocating for a successful transition to other energy generation opportunities such as nuclear energy. I’m also not about to let this district become a dumping ground for waste and pollution.

**3.** We must do better to provide for our veterans and their families – true heroes – after they serve our nation, bottom line. I was disgusted when one of our own celebrated after denying needed health coverage to veterans who are sick and suffering from chemical exposure. Congress has the authority and responsibility to hold VA leaders accountable, starting at the top. I would work with Sen. Tester to conduct reviews, audits, investigate, and hold officials accountable when they fail our veterans. I would also institute a direct line to my office for veterans to report any problems with the VA.

**4.** Living in next year county means the next devastating wildland fire could be right around the corner, and it’s becoming more frequent with warmer temperatures. Firefighters need to be justly compensated for the life-risking work they do protecting all of us. When firefighters make less than what most fast food joints pay, workforce shortages are inevitable, which puts us all at risk and shifts costs on to local taxpayers. We need to treat the job with the dignity and respect it deserves by justly compensating our wildland firefighters. Congress should immediately pass the paid-for bipartisan Wildland Firefighter Paycheck Protection Act.

**5.** I promise to be a partner to our tribal nations, communities, and all Native Americans. A top priority of mine would be to address the inequities Native Americans face, particularly healthcare coverage and outcomes. I’m committed to ending the missing and murdered indigenous women epidemic ravaging and destroying Native families and communities. Over 132,000 Montanans, including Native Americans and kids, got kicked off of Medicaid-supported healthcare

coverage. That’s idiotic, insulting, and harmful. It hurts rural providers the worst and will be another tax on working families and seniors by raising healthcare prices for the rest of us.



### Ric Holden – R

**Home:** PO Box 792, Glendive, MT 59330



**1.** My family has had a long history of cooperation with the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks department.

In 1991 we were one of the first ranches that participated in the Block Management Program. Through this program we have allowed free public access to hunt and fish on our ranch along the Yellowstone River. The state FW&P’s mission is to provide for the stewardship of fish, wildlife, parks, and recreational resources of Montana. We must also contribute to the quality of life for future generations. State FWP by virtue of their responsibilities and expertise, is the essential agency to preserve threatened and endangered species. I think that the state agencies must be given the opportunity to provide input prior to submission of updated federal policies. Given my background of working with the departments both as a State Senator and a landowner, I believe that reasonable solutions can be attained to balance endangered species and individual property rights. The main point is that you must be able to sit down and talk about these solutions. I have real life experience with this subject as an active participant in the ESA debate.

**2.** Years ago, I would have been more inclined to support federal subsidies for wind and solar energy to bring on more sources of electrical generation. In the last two years the poor results of these sources to produce electricity have become clear here in Montana. I love the wide-open spaces of the Montana skyline and we expect a minimal impact on the footprint to our state for electrical generation. We know now that hailstorms destroy solar panels, and

the wind turbines don't turn when it is below zero. Hundreds of miles of wind turbines are more than I care to see. We need to get back to what we have in eastern Montana, and that is coal, oil, and natural gas. Those are the reliable resources that will provide our most reliable power generation here in Montana with the smallest footprint on the landscape. In 1990, geologist reported that "Even at current mining levels, Montana's coal reserves will last more than 2,000 years". We need to change direction and start supporting responsible development of coal, oil and natural gas.

**3.** I have a long legislative pro-veteran voting record with the Veterans in our state. In the early 1990's I was part of the community effort that lobbied to bring the Eastern Montana Vets Home to Glendive to serve the far eastern part of our state. Then as a senator, I met with Governor Racicot to get it opened a year earlier than expected. We then pushed through the siting of the veteran's cemetery in Miles City. As vice chairman of the senate transportation committee, I supported letting the veterans have their own vehicle license plates. Over the course of my senate tenure, I voted for many tax, fees and licensing reductions for the veterans. My interest in serving the country goes clear back to my time in the US Air Force in the Reserved Officer Training Corps. The health of our veterans is my top priority. The VA needs to offer timely, quality services for Veterans through care and respect for one's physical, psychological and spiritual health. I am committed to seeing to it that the VA delivers top-quality services to our Veterans. A staffer will be dedicated to Veterans issues in my office.

**4.** I realize that without a strong federal firefighting workforce, the U.S is less prepared to battle wildfires, putting people, infrastructure, and natural resources at risk. Federal agencies also stand to lose the institutional knowledge and leadership critical to training the next generation of firefighters. The easy answer is to give the firefighters a raise. The reality is our country is broke with a 34 trillion dollar debt and a dollar that has lost its purchasing power. As of



March 23, 2024, the average hourly pay for a Wildland Firefighter in Montana is \$14.69 an hour. You can make more than that at McDonald's serving hamburgers. Obviously, some wage parity is in order. In the wildland firefighting world right now, Congress's budget dysfunctions are a big distraction for firefighters. We are straining the limits of our firefighters because Congress is allowing good forestry practices including logging, to be replaced by extreme environmental lobbyists that prefer "let it burn policies". I will support the firefighters and the taxpayers. My thought would be that if we restart our federal forestry conservation plans that include logging, then we can use federal timber sale money to pay for wage hikes.

**5.** Native Americans endure a legacy of healthcare disparities, leading to disproportionate diseased rates. People living on the remote reservations of Montana rely on Indian Health Service clinics for medical care. The clinic focusses on health care crises rather than preventive care. Transportation is an impediment to healthcare because of the long distances to clinics. Here are some items that I think can be done more often within the tribal communities. A. Health screenings for diabetes, high blood pressure and cancer. B. education classes on healthy nutrition and diabetes prevention, C. Immunizations, pre-and post-natal care, and parenting classes. D. Health visits with those who are homebound.

Coronary artery disease affects native population in disparate ways, largely driven by higher rates of diabetes. Currently, tribal members must travel to receive weekly dialyses treatments. It would be more cost-effective to have a machine set up in a local tribal clinic and have the specialist travel to the reservation to administer the care. This would save money for everyone involved.



### Joel Krautter – R



**Age:** 36

**Home:** Billings

**Occupation:** Attorney and small business owner

**Education:** Liberty University (B.S. Govt.),

University of Montana School of Law (J.D.)

#### Contact information for voters:

website [www.joelformontana.com](http://www.joelformontana.com);  
email [joel@joelformontana.com](mailto:joel@joelformontana.com);  
Social Media: [www.facebook.com/joelformontana](https://www.facebook.com/joelformontana)

**1.** Too often the Endangered Species Act is enforced and managed at the federal level, telling states what to do. We need to flip that approach to make sure that credible data and reliable science, from state and local officials, together with public input is informing

the decisions being made.

**2.** As a former state representative of the largest oil and gas producing county in Montana, Richland County, I understand the importance of fossil fuel energy, now and into the future for our state. In recent years, Montana has also become an emerging leader in Montana-made renewable energy, embracing wind and solar technologies, along with hydro-electric power generation. In the future, Montana needs to embrace hydrogen and industrial energy storage solutions, as well as innovations in hydro-electric power generation.

**3.** The federal government must keep their promises to veterans and their families. More work needs to be done to improve the quality of care veterans receive and to reduce wait-times for veterans trying to access care. Veterans must have access to the most modern healthcare solutions available and they shouldn't have to travel hundreds of miles to access care. When elected, I intend to serve on the Veterans Affairs Committee and be active on the oversight committee, with jurisdiction over the department of Veterans Affairs. In this role, I will be a staunch advocate for Montana veterans and their families.

**4.** The men and women who put their lives in danger as wildland firefighters to protect us from wildfires deserve to be paid fairly and in a timely manner, that appreciates the risks associated with this profession. Unions representing these people have a right through collective bargaining to negotiate what the compensation and hazard pay should look like and that should not be impeded by any agency. Paying for the services of hardworking wildland firefighters is a net-positive and a good investment in our economy, in that their skills, knowledge and dedication have the effect of mitigating devastating economic losses.

**5.** The Indian Health Service (IHS) is woefully inadequate, with a failed system that leaves well-meaning healthcare providers and the people they serve in an impossible position. I believe we need to rebuild the IHS with a focus on innovation and modernization of services, based upon local needs,



local knowledge and local cultures.

We must improve the manner in which healthcare is provided in these areas of Montana, relying on local solutions that are culturally aware and fully funded at the federal level. The federal government must keep the promises that were made to Native Americans over a century ago.



### Stacy Zinn – R



**Age:** 57

**Home:** Billings

**Family:** Yes

**Occupation:**

Retired from the Drug Enforcement Administration

**Education:** Bachelor's and Master's Degree

**Contact information for voters:**

ZinnforMT.gov; @ZinnforMT; FB: StacyZinnforCongress

**1.** I served in the DEA as a Special Agent for almost 23 years and built relationships across the state with local enforcement and other federal agencies. I would have been embarrassed to have asked Congressman Rosendale to help settle our differences with other entities when they occurred. However, if there is a problem that can not be resolved and it got to my level, I would ask the U.S. Attorney's Office to host a sit down meeting with all concern parties to discuss disagreements and iron out solutions. Based on experience, high ranking officials' presence at the meeting stifles honest conversation so I would have to relay on those in leadership position to be the adults in the room in order to accomplish the overall goal of working together.

**2.** Investments should be made to stabilize the market across the board. Tipping the scales to meet an ideological agenda is not cost effective nor is it smart. A balance is needed in order to serve the people and implement new energy sources at a pace development can take place without disrupting the overall

production of energy. Coal-fired power plants need to be preserved while nuclear power production needs to be implemented.

**3.** More primary care doctors, PAs and NPs are needed. The ratio of one provider to many patients is not sustainable. This leads to burn-out and missed issues. Next, an urgent care facility staffed with providers is needed. This would save money in the long run. Hire more psychologist specializing in combat veteran care and look at paying a comparable rate for specialty providers in order to keep them in Montana.

**4.** I would support the Wildland Firefighter Paycheck Protection Act (S.2272). As written, the bill makes 2022 pay raises permanent by creating a special pay rate for federal firefighters – based on percentage increases to each level of the General Schedule – and provides a new pay supplement to compensate firefighters for every day they are deployed to combat a wildfire. The funding mechanism for these new salaries would come from the money given to the UN, WHO and the NGOs. It is time to invest in our American workers rather than fund organizations that are out to cripple us.

**5.** I would support additional educational programs for those still living on the reservations. Heart disease due to unhealthy life styles is preventable. Health issues are also the result of illegal drug use. In order to curb drug use seen on all of the Montana reservations, I would encourage doubling BIA's footprint on the reservations in order to provide better law & order against those trafficking drugs within these communities.

### SUPREME COURT JUSTICE

#### Katherine Bidegaray



**Age:** 63

**Home:** Sidney

**Family:** Mother of five children, grandmother of six grandchildren.

**Occupation:** District Judge, Montana 7th

Judicial District

**Education:** Bachelor's Degrees in Political Science and Philosophy, Law Degree (JD) from the University of Montana School of Law

**Contact information for voters:**

bidegaray@bidegarayformontana.com

**1.** I work hard in my courtroom to be certain that everybody is treated with respect, in a manner that is impartial from any political or personal preference. I apply the law fairly and according the letter of the law, not embracing any political or social doctrine. The 1972 Montana Constitution, the United States Constitution and established precedent and statutes are my only guides. I do not engage in any political party activities or events. My opponent regularly attends partisan political party events, including giving speeches which creates the appearance of soliciting political endorsements. I am not politician.

**2.** I am not a politician, and I do not participate in political or partisan events or engagements. As a District Judge and as a candidate for the Montana Supreme Court, it is important that all litigants – regardless of gender, social status, wealth or legal status – know I will treat them fairly, impartially, and according to the law. For this reason, I avoid doing anything that conflicts, or creates the appearance of conflicting, with that policy.

**3.** As an ex-officio member of the Montana Justice Foundation, I am committed to its mission of achieving equal access to justice for all Montanans through effective funding and leadership. It is not every day that a citizen is involved in the judicial branch of government and our courts. When litigants come before the court, it is important that they have access to free or affordable legal counsel, forms, and information regarding the courts. They must be given respect by the Judge and all employees and representatives of the courts. I am an advocate of increased funding for Montana Legal Service, public defenders, and Montana's judicial branch.



### Jerry O'Neil

**Age:** 80

**Home:** For the last 20+ years I have lived at 985 Walsh Road, Columbia Falls, Montana 59912

**Family:** Pauline, the

mother of my five children, and grandmother of my 14 grandchildren died from lung cancer, as well as my wife Jeanne

**Occupation:** I am a non-Indian, who has been licensed 40 years, since 1984, as an Advocate and Counselor with the Blackfeet Tribal Court System. Off-reservation I have worked as an Independent Paralegal.

**Education:** When I was a teenager, I attended both Montana State University and the University of Montana. Later, in the 1970s, I received an AA degree in math and computers from the Flathead Valley Community College.

**Contact information for voters:**

Jerry O'Neil for Montana Supreme Court, 985 Walsh Road, Columbia Falls, MT 59912, JerryONeil5@gmail.com; JerryONeil.com; 406-250-2503

**1.** I am the only candidate in the race for the Montana Supreme Court who doesn't believe it is acceptable, or Constitutional, to limit the public's choice of candidates to members of the Montana Bar Association, a closed fraternity.

According to Seattle University School of Law Dean Anthony E. Varona: "When it comes to assessing lawyer competence, we saw again and again and again in our research conclusive evidence that the existing bar exam is far from a foolproof or even reliable measure of competence; and, to the detriment of both candidates and the profession, it replicates and perpetuates bias."

**2.** I would strive to uphold the legacy of retiring Justice Dirk Sandefur, and point out when the Court is legislating from the bench as he did in the recent case of the Democratic Party v. Christi Jacobsen, Montana Secretary of State. If I believe a statute before the Court

is legal, but wrong, I will say that, and hope the Legislature will change it. As a Justice of the Court, it will not be my right or place to change the laws to reflect my political philosophy.

**3.** One of several ways I would make the Court more accessible and understandable, would be to uphold MCA, § 25-31-601 which states: “Who may act as attorney. (1) Parties in justice’s court may appear and act in person or by attorney—(2) Any person, except the constable by whom the summons or jury process was served, may act as attorney for a party.”

I would give support for the people of Montana to use this statute to allow them the right of privacy to associate with non-attorneys to help them in our Justice Courts.



### Dan Wilson

**Age:** 59

**Home:** Kalispell

**Family:** Married 27 years to wife, Tia; daughter attending UM

**Occupation:** District Court Judge

**Education:** B.A., Penn State, 1987; J.D., cum laude, University of Minnesota, 1993

**Contact information for voters:**  
info@wilsonforjustice.com

**1.** My judicial philosophy is simple: interpret and apply the provisions of the United States and Montana Constitutions and all laws according to their original intent and plain meaning, and do not follow the views of special interests or personal views to determine the outcome of any case. Respect the rule of law, including the law of precedent, and do not legislate from the bench.

Further, I believe judicial candidates should state their judicial philosophy for themselves. That said, I have not spoken to my opponent about her judicial philosophy, and she has not asked me about mine.

**2.** I would maintain an independent judiciary by adhering to the traditions and standards established by

generations of judges before me, including the faithful application of the law and legal precedent to all cases, respecting the proper role of all branches and institutions of government, and by seeking to maintain stability and predictability in the law. To preserve the nonpartisan nature of the election, I will abide by the tradition of nonpartisan races – as I have in past elections – by running on my record and my experience.

**3.** I would have more oral arguments in cases before the Supreme Court. Rather than holding several each year, I would urge my colleagues to conduct several each month. Oral arguments are public hearings during which the Justices and the parties engage in open discussion about the legal issues in a case, and I believe these hearings would provide the best opportunity for Montanans to see and understand how the members of the Supreme Court work through and resolve the many complex and difficult legal issues that confront them.

### SUPREME COURT JUSTICE-CHIEF JUSTICE

### Jerry Lynch



**1.** My judicial philosophy is based on my experience as a judge, my commitment to the Montana Constitution, and my conviction that a nonpartisan, impartial judiciary is the mortar

that holds our democracy together. I’m the only candidate for Chief Justice who is running to preserve our nonpartisan, impartial judiciary, not to try to remake it any one individual or group’s liking. Litigants in my courtroom can be sure of a fair hearing based on the unique facts of their case. They can trust that I will faithfully apply the law, regardless of politics.

**2.** I am a champion of the 1972 Montana State Constitution. At the Montana Supreme Court, as Chief Justice I will ensure that we follow the law as it is written and will be certain that the law is enforced regardless of politics. The

judiciary only functions if it is independent and nonpartisan, and ensuring ours remains so will be my north star. As Chief Justice, I will expand trainings for District Judges and employees of the Montana judicial branch to ensure everybody understands the importance of being apolitical and impartial.

**3.** The Montana Constitution guarantees every citizen the right to a quality education. Government and civics lessons are a fundamental part of a quality education. I am an enthusiastic supporter of civics education in every school. I will also continue the important work begun by Chief Justice McGrath to modernize our courts. This includes embracing technology that allows for e-filing documents, livestreaming arguments, and making case dockets searchable online. These technologies help bring the court into our communities. I will continue to embrace the power of technology to make our courts more accessible and understandable. As well, I will advocate for increased funding for Montana legal services and public defenders throughout the State of Montana, not just urban centers.



### Cory Swanson

**Age:** 47

**Home:** Townsend

**Family:** Married to Julie, children Caleb and Claire

**Occupation:**

Broadwater County

Attorney and Colonel in the Montana Army National Guard

**Education:** BA in Political Science from Carroll College, 2000; JD with Honors from University of Montana School of Law, 2004; Masters in Strategic Studies from U.S. Army War College, 2021.

**Contact information for voters:**  
<https://swansonforjustice.com/>

**1.** My judicial philosophy can best be summarized as a judicially conservative (not the same as politically conservative). I believe any court, but especially the Supreme

Court, should focus on resolving each case based upon the facts and law of that case, on a narrow basis which we call a holding. The Court should respect the work of District Courts below it, and should follow its own precedent unless absolutely compelled to overrule or modify prior precedent. If the Court is asked to interpret a statute, the Court should begin with the plain text of that instrument, and should not declare a law unconstitutional based on mere whim, dislike, or even inconsistency. In all their dealings, Justices should strive to be fair and impartial and as non-political as humanly possible.

I was surprised to see my opponent advocate a different point of view, both in public and in private. He has made statements that appear to be advocating outcomes on certain types of cases. I do not believe judges should do that. We cannot predict an outcome on a case that may not yet exist, and which has not been briefed to us.

My opponent has also been somewhat combative toward the Legislative branch. He has accused the Legislature of creating conflict with the Court, and has cast his role as one who will fight against that branch. I cannot promise to uphold every statute passed by the Legislature, in the event it is challenged. But I won’t go out of my way to pick unnecessary political fights. The Court should respect its co-equal branches of government, and demand respect in return. The Court should not take a posture of fighting against the Legislature; the case law is very clear about how statutes are to be interpreted with deference.

**2.** I have worked from the very first day of this campaign to preserve the nonpartisan nature of this race. I have gone to political gatherings of both parties, and I have spoken to opponents and supporters across the political spectrum. In every instance, I have resisted partisan labels and have advocated for a fair and impartial judiciary. We don’t want a conservative or liberal, Republican or Democrat court. We want a court that treats every litigant fairly, and every case stands or falls on its own merits.

Judicial independence is guaranteed by the Montana Constitution. The power



to maintain it lies within the hands of the judges, and no one else. Judges and Justices must ensure they evaluate every case based upon the law and facts of that case, not based upon who supports or opposes a particular outcome. I will strive to maintain judicial independence the same way I have each day of the race—I tell voters they are not voting for a particular outcome on any case or any policy issue. They are voting for my mind and my commitment to a fair and impartial Court. If elected, I will strive to carry that out each and every day.

**3.** I do think this is an important objective for the Court. Part of the recent political turmoil about the Court is that very few people understand how it works and how it reaches decisions. We need to increase visibility among the attorneys and the general public.

I would first recommend more oral arguments so more cases can be decided in a more public manner, and anyone who is interested can listen or attend. If we can obtain the resources, I would also advocate more accessible viewing options, such as video or audio streaming. As Chief Justice, I would also plan a speaker's program in communities across the State, including in schools, to raise awareness of the court and the practice of law. And I would emphasize community relations and intergovernmental relations. The more the Legislature understands the Court, the more lawmakers may appreciate our nuances or quirks that today seem to unnecessarily inflame political passions.

**CLERK OF THE  
SUPREME COURT**

**Bowen Greenwood – R**



**Age:** 52  
**Home:** East Helena  
**Family:** Fourth generation Montanan, single, one sister, mother and father deceased.

**Occupation:** Clerk of the Montana Supreme Court

**Education:** Graduated from Billings West High School in 1990. BA from Georgetown University in 1994.





**Contact information for voters:**  
www.GreenwoodForMontana.com,  
bowen@greenwoodformontana.com

**1.** This question is factually incorrect. This office is not nonpartisan, and for good reason. As Clerk of the Montana Supreme Court, I've operated the office under budget every year. I stand up for change on the court. I fight for the court to treat all cases equally according to the rules, instead of elevating some above others. That's what makes me the conservative choice for Clerk of the Montana Supreme Court. I'm delighted and honored to be a Republican.

**2.** As Clerk, I began the practice of emailing every single opinion the court issues out to every Montanan who wants them. I also began the practice of listing high profile cases on courts.mt.gov/clerk. Montanans don't always know docket numbers, party names, or attorney names, which makes it hard to search court cases. Listing all the cases in the news makes it easier for the people of Montana to find the cases they care about. I would like to see the Court itself improve transparency as well, so the people can see what their court is doing.

## HOUSE DISTRICT 36

### Melissa Smith – D



**Age:** 51

**Home:** Billings

**Family:** Spouse and two children

**Occupation:** Website Developer

**Education:** BA, Art

**Contact information for voters:**  
melissa@esmiths.net, 406-534-9879

**1.** I believe we should continue Medicaid expansion to help low-income Montanans access healthcare. It's already helped lower healthcare costs for individuals and small businesses, keeping kids healthy and in school, and helping more people work and support their families. In addition to being a moral choice, the Montana economy benefits from increased access to healthcare by supporting healthcare jobs, especially in rural areas.

**2.** The State already had a plan to reduce property taxes last year, but it was ignored by our governor and republican super-majority, who could, and did, legislate what they wanted. We currently have an unequal tax system where only homeowners must pay the full value of their property, while businesses and corporations are given exemptions and rate caps. I support fully equalizing our property tax system to give tax relief to homeowners, and more fairly distributing our revenue needs across all Montanans, families and business owners alike.

**3.** Montana can expand available housing by incentivizing affordable housing development, easing regulatory hurdles, and investing in infrastructure. Policies like tax credits for developers, streamlined permits, and improved public transit can expand affordable housing options. Supporting programs offering down payment assistance and low-interest loans aids first-time buyers. While subsidies may help, a more complete strategy includes addressing regulatory, financial, and infrastructure aspects is vital for lasting impact.

**4.** The voters in my district are my neighbors, and many of their experiences are my own. Even so, the best way to learn is with an open mind, so the surest way to find out is to walk my neighborhood, knock on voters' doors and ask, what are the most pressing issues for you?

**5.** The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks plays an important role in upholding our state constitution's directive to protect and improve our environment and natural resources. Moreover, Montana's outdoor recreation economy generates billions of dollars in consumer spending and more than 71,000 jobs. I believe that it's important for the FWP to practice science based best practices to gather information that provides conservation, restoration, and enhancement needs of our wildlife habitat. I'd also like to see more public engagement with hunting and fishing programs, while working to reduce impacts from increased visitation.

## HOUSE DISTRICT 40

### Mike Vinton – R

**Age:** 57

**Home:** Lockwood

**Family:** Wife (Sue), four children, three grandchildren

**Occupation:** Self Employed General

Contractor

**Education:** BS Computer Engineering – Montana Tech; Masters in Business Administration—University of Phoenix.

**Contact information for voters:**

Facebook: Mike Vinton For Montana;  
website: www.VintonForMontana.com;  
email: mikev@vintonlog.com; phone:  
406-855-3345

**1.** While it is difficult to state definitively how I would vote on any legislation without the benefit of reading the proposal, currently approximately 25% of Montanans are on Medicaid, and I think that is too many. This program has merit and should be available to those that truly need it (disabled, low income elderly), but we can't continue to expand entitlement programs and sustain a healthy economy. If Medicaid is expanded beyond sustainable levels, it may not be available to those that require this important assistance. We also should focus more on educating and training people to prosper in this land of opportunity thereby reducing the number of individuals relying upon government assistance.

**2.** It would be presumptuous to think any one person has a solution to reduce property taxes, and it is too big of a subject for a survey question. Having said that I will give some thoughts: For instance, in my personal property bill, 100% of the "state" portion of my tax bill goes to schools. In order to reduce this portion of my tax, it would be necessary to take money away from the schools, which I would not be willing to support. If we want to reduce the state portion of property taxes, we must replace it with revenue from another source. Where would that come from? The rest of the property tax bill is comprised of local taxes, where citizens have a louder voice

and greater power to control these. Citizens have to decide if they would like to have lower taxes in lieu of giving up some government programs. I look forward to the opportunity to work with citizens and legislators to reduce the overall tax burden on Montanans.

**3.** We need to keep the cost of development down, and state government can help by assisting communities with funds for infrastructure. Is this a subsidy? I see it as an investment into our state, where no one company or individual should benefit from it, rather an entire community. Regulations need to be relaxed in many cases, but this has more to do with local governments than the state. Personal and corporate subsidies should not be part of the solution.

**4.** I am very engaged with my community and have an open line of communication with anyone regarding issues that are important to them. I am accessible by phone, e-mail, website and on social media. I am often at community events and meetings. If elected, I encourage anyone with issues to please bring them to me and any legislator for that matter.

**5.** Wildlife management should be left to the biologists using current data and research to keep populations at sustainable levels. The FWP does a good job trying to engage the public in their processes, even though we may not agree with some of the things they do. Land access should continue to be an important part of the management priorities, through programs such as Block Management, and others.



### Josh Visocan – R

**Age:** 47

**Home:** Huntley

**Family:** I am married to Michelle Mantz Visocan. We have a son named Kase, who is 7-years old.

**Occupation:** Sales Representative

**Education:** Montana State University; U.S. Coast Guard Training Center Cape May, New Jersey, U.S. Coast Guard Training Center





Yorktown, Virginia

**Contact information for voters:**

Visocan4Montana@gmail.com;  
Visocan4Montana.org

**1.** I am not for Medicaid expansion. I believe there is Medicaid abuse going on in Montana and the rest of the country. Medicaid is for people who need it, not the unmotivated. This abuse of the system raises everyone's insurance premiums.

**2.** Local government needs to watch their spending. The more they spend, the higher our property tax is going to be.

**3.** I believe the state can give private contractors/builders a tax incentive to build affordable housing. Donated land or tax delinquent properties could be rezoned for building affordable housing.

**4.** I grew up in a ranching and farming community. Everybody always meets for coffee and talks about the issues going on in the community. I would like to have a monthly coffee talk at a local coffee shop. My family and I also like to attend local sporting events. This is a great place to talk with people and become a part of the community.

**5.** We need to keep overpopulation down to keep disease and unnecessary suffering to animals. We have to keep a balance of pasture land for our Montana ranchers.

**HOUSE DISTRICT 42**

**Bill Hodges – R**

**Age:** 69

**Home:** Hardin, Big Horn County

**Family:** Married 39 Years. Two adult daughters

**Occupation:** Retired

**Education:** High School: Billings Senior/Post Secondary: Rocky MT College. Graduate School: MSU Billings/Masters In Healthcare Admin.

**Contact information for voters:**

E-Mail: bill.hodges55@outlook.com;  
Website: In Development

**1.** I would support expansion based

on more strict protocols for access of the program along with increased support staff for the Medicaid program. An improved Medicaid application for income/asset collection would benefit staff and applicants accessing the program. Not a hand out, but a hand up mentality for the vulnerable population Medicaid serves in Montana.

**2.** Providing for a cap on the property tax. Such as 5% on a calendar tax year. Challenge local government entity to be for cost conscience with tax-payer dollars. Taxing on revenue status of the tax-payer in an equitable formula that is equal across the collection/assessment system. Providing an incentive for payment of taxes such as once a tax-payer has sustained 35 years of taxes in the state, the obligation for future taxes is forgiven.

**3.** Community Trust Funds for a base to develop affordable housing may be an option to pursue. Analyze current buildings in a community that are vacant & could be renovated instead of building new housing. Providing a "sweat equity" provision for occupant ownership of the housing unit.

**4.** Communication of state issues will be communicated to voters by accessing my website along with scheduled community Legislative Information voter group meetings designed to update & solicit feedback from my voter district constituency. Voter mail out forms for voter input may be option if significant amount of voters are limited with internet access. Local civic groups such as Chamber of Commerce, Senior Citizens, School Board, Tribal Boards will be contacted for opinions/input on legislative issues impacting House District 42.

**5.** A critical management priority would be increased staffing of the game wardens statewide in Montana. I have a seasonal position as a boat inspector with the Aquatic Invasive Specie division of FWP, and staffing appears to be challenging for the game wardens in the field. A specific category/division of game wardens for supervision of one segment of management or oversight would be appropriate. A division for hunting,

fishing, watercraft, etc., would be my suggestion. A priority of purchasing land/property that improve public access should also be a critical goal/objective for FWP.

**HOUSE DISTRICT 43**

**Alexander Clark – D**



**Age:** 39

**Home:** Billings

**Family:** Two children

**Occupation:**  
Community organizer

**Education:** B.S.

Montana State University Billings

**Contact information for voters:**

clark4montana.com

**1.** Continuing Medicaid expansion is vital for Montana's populace, healthcare infrastructure, economy, and fiscal stability. It ensures hardworking, low-income Montanans receive essential medical, mental health, and substance abuse treatment. By sustaining urban hospitals, clinics, and rural critical access hospitals, Medicaid expansion maintains financial stability. Additionally, it bolsters the economy by supporting approximately 7,500 jobs and generating \$475 million in personal income and \$775 million in economic activity. Moreover, through budget savings and increased tax revenues, Medicaid expansion not only covers the state's investment but also enhances fiscal health.

**2.** Montana must initiate several measures to address property tax concerns. Firstly, it should heed the Department of Revenue's recommendation from November 2021 by reducing the residential property tax rate from 1.35 percent to 0.94 percent. Secondly, implementing an automatic property tax "circuit breaker" is crucial. This entails providing tax refunds to homeowners and renters facing potential displacement due to excessive property tax burdens. This mechanism could be integrated into Montana's income tax return process. Finally, there's a pressing need to counteract the ongoing trend of shifting tax burdens from income-

generating industrial and commercial properties to non-income generating residential properties.

**3.** To enhance housing affordability in Montana, the state government can implement various strategies. These include incentivizing the construction of affordable housing through tax credits or grants, promoting mixed-income developments, and streamlining zoning regulations to encourage housing construction. Subsidies can be appropriate if targeted effectively, such as providing rental assistance for low-income individuals or offering down payment assistance for first-time homebuyers. Additionally, investing in infrastructure to support affordable housing developments and partnering with nonprofit organizations and private developers can further bolster affordability efforts while ensuring sustainable growth.

**4.** To ensure effective communication with voters in our district and grasp their top priorities, I'd employ a multi-faceted approach. This would involve regular town hall meetings, community forums, and door-to-door canvassing to directly engage with constituents. Additionally, I'd utilize digital platforms and social media to reach a broader audience and gather feedback through surveys and online polls. Building strong relationships with local community leaders, advocacy groups, and neighborhood associations would provide valuable insights into pressing issues. By maintaining an open dialogue and actively listening to constituents, I'd stay informed about their concerns and advocate for their needs effectively.

**5.** My wildlife management priorities for the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks center on preserving biodiversity, protecting critical habitats, and promoting sustainable coexistence between humans and wildlife. This involves implementing science-based conservation measures to safeguard endangered species, restoring degraded ecosystems, and managing wildlife populations to maintain ecological balance. Additionally, fostering public education and community engagement programs to raise awareness about conservation

issues and promote responsible stewardship of natural resources is essential. By prioritizing habitat conservation, species protection, and fostering harmony between wildlife and communities, we can ensure a thriving natural environment for future generations.

## HOUSE DISTRICT 45

### Denise Baum – D



**1.** Yes, I would vote to continue Medicaid expansion. Medicaid expansion keeps Montanans healthy and working especially those working in jobs which are critical to the

economy such as childcare or other service sector jobs. I support legislation that lifts the sunset on Medicaid expansion and would also support permanently removing the sunset. Expansion keeps the doors open on our rural hospitals and keeps the uncompensated care costs down.

**2.** The legislature chose to prioritize significant tax cuts for the wealthiest 1 percent, and chose to dish out multiple one-time rebates instead of utilizing the historic surplus towards any type of long-term policy solutions. Families with the lowest incomes are paying a greater share of their income in State and Local taxes, and residential taxpayers (ie, homeowners and renters) are paying a greater share of property taxes. Enacting legislation that will reduce property taxes for those whose property taxes exceed a percentage of their income, and require corporations and those with higher incomes to pay their fair share of taxes.

**4.** I have served the Billings community for over 20 years as a law enforcement officer. I have spoken to thousands of people during the course of my investigations and duties as a detective. The best way to ensure that you are communicating with the voters in your district is to actually be out there knocking on doors, asking them about their concerns and taking the time to listen. For me, this is the best part about running for office. Also,

making myself available and reachable via telephone, email, website and social media ensures that voters are able to contact me.

**5.** My wildlife management priorities for the Montana FWP focuses on removing the influence of special interests from our wildlife management decisions and promotes ethical wildlife management based on science. Every person should have an equal opportunity to participate in hunting and fishing and to be able to freely access all public lands. Allowing for new land conservation efforts will help preserve our public lands for generations to come.



### Kassidy Olson – R



**Age:** 42

**Home:** Billings

**Family:** Single

**Occupation:** Casino manager

**Education:** Bachelor's

degree in Political Science from MSU-Billings

#### Contact information for voters:

kassidyolsonformt@gmail.com

**1.** I would have to see what is in the bill but I support people who need Medicaid and are eligible to continue to be enrolled in the program.

**2.** Lowering property taxes on a permanent basis can be achieved one way through proper handling of government funds. The lottery money and marijuana are supposed to support many things such as education as one example. Yet every year the schools request more money through mill levies. Where is all of this money really be allocated too? So the first step I would look at would be accountability of state funds being collected and dispersed.

**3.** Affordable housing is a huge issues. Montana's population growth since 2020 has far out paced the growth of housing. Home ownership is a cornerstone of the American dream and it is being priced out of reach for most Montanans. Several issues can help address this issue. First things

need to change on the national level. Locally we can re-open more logging mills/cut regulations for these mills. Changing zoning laws may help. Reach out to more developers for housing construction. Look at potentially changing banking regulations and requirements. If we can increase supply and cut the cost of housing goods coupled with a lower Fed interest rate we can lower the prices to make home ownership attainable again. Out of staters should not cost Montanans their dream of home ownership.

**4.** Communication is key to virtually everything. To stay in touch with voters I would say email is the best form of communication. Constituents can email questions and concerns and get a prompt reply. Staying in touch locally through door knocking and holding community events/being a part of these events is another great way to stay in touch. My campaign is all about listening to what the voters want and setting the agenda around that. I honestly believe listening to them will be a large part in solving and answering the questions the Gazette asked as well as many more state issues.

**5.** Montana is so beautiful and has so many outdoor activities that we have cherished for generations. I always have and always will continue to support access to public lands for hunting, fishing, hiking, etc.

## HOUSE DISTRICT 46

### Emma Kerr-Carpenter – D



**Age:** 35

**Home:** Billings

**Family:** Spouse (Dan) and 2-year-old son

**Occupation:** Stay-at-home mom

**Education:** Bachelor's from Boston University, 2012

#### Contact information for voters:

Email—emmaformontana@gmail.com; Website—www.emmaformontana.org; Phone—406-894-0377

**1.** Everyone deserves healthcare, no exceptions. Maintaining your health is part of living a free and satisfying

life. Many people in our communities are struggling with chronic disease or addiction and can't afford care. The legislature must continue Medicaid expansion past 2025. Medicaid expansion is a great deal for Montana. It has been a crucial tool for helping many of our friends and neighbors get or stay healthy enough to work or get an education. Expansion has created good paying jobs across the state, helped keep healthcare accessible in rural Montana, and costs the state pennies on the dollar to maintain.

**2.** During the legislature the Governor and Republican supermajority could have acted on the advice of the Department of Revenue and adjusted the property tax rate to account for the recent increases in property values. Instead they frittered time away giving tax breaks to the wealthy and big businesses. Big property tax payers—like big corporations, owners of railroads and mines—have a cap on how much their property taxes can increase, but homeowners do not.. We have to enact long term property tax relief plans that protect middle class Montanans from footing the bill that gives big corporations a tax break.

**3.** Housing in Montana is so unaffordable and hard to come by that we must utilize every tool to make renting and buying a home possible. I am in favor of almost any tax credits and subsidies, especially those that go directly to the resident. The last legislature made progress in increasing the number of living units available, but now it's time to work on making sure Montanans can afford what is available. The Legislature also needs to continue to protect the rights of mobile home owners against out-of-state corporations intent on pricing them out of their communities.

**4.** There's no substitute for meeting the voters in my district face-to-face. I will be knocking on thousands of doors in my district in the coming months to get to know voters and which issues are on their minds. Voters can also call or email me. My phone number and email are listed above. I make an effort to listen and respond to everyone, and I keep in mind which issues I am



hearing about.

**5.** I will vote to preserve our right to hunt, fish, and hike on our public lands. The legislature needs to make sure FWP is well-managed and that top officials support employees in the field such as park rangers, wardens, wildlife biologists. We can also create more opportunities for Montanans to enjoy our public lands by funding programs that acquire new parcels and maintain our public lands and facilities. I support returning wildlife management back to the experts. Legislators should set a general direction for how we manage our public lands. Biologists and other experts should be in charge of details.

## HOUSE DISTRICT 47

### Thomas Mahon – R

**Age:** 57

**Occupation:** Ranching

**Education:** Laramie County Community College degree in ranch management

**Contact information for voters:**  
Tmahon189@gmail.com

- 1.** No expansion of Medicaid.
- 2.** Counties need to have their own ballot of reducing administration costs per county/school districts to reduce property tax.

**3.** I will not vote for any bill where the state is involved in the housing business. Leave it to the counties and cities. Absolutely no subsidies.

**4.** One on one communication is the best way of working with constituents.

**5.** Delist the Grizzly. They and wolves are predators and therefore should be open to predator harvest. That includes all predators coming out of the park on to public and private land. They also need to obey the 76 timber act and quit using conservation as the straw man to promote a phony green agenda .



### James Reavis – D

**Age:** 40

**Home:** Billings

**Family:** I'm part of a large Montanan family. My mother runs a 200-head cattle ranch outside of Boulder,



and my father is an architect who specializes in preserving historic buildings. My sister is a legal services attorney and my brothers are involved in welding, architecture, healthcare, and metal fabrication across Montana. My girlfriend is a dog groomer in Billings.



THOM BRIDGE, INDEPENDENT RECORD

The Montana state Capitol building in Helena.



**Occupation:** I am an attorney with the firm Netzer, Krautter, & Brown, P.C. Before that I was a public defender with the State of Montana for over a decade.

**Education:** Law degree from the University of Montana, a Master's in Public Administration from the Middlebury Institute, and a Bachelor's in History from Washington State University.

**Contact information for voters:**  
www.reavisformontana.com/contact,  
james@reavisformontana.com

**1.** Yes. Passing permanent Medicaid expansion is critical for a healthy and productive workforce, providing reliable treatment for substance abuse, and keeping our rural hospitals operating. It's also the right thing to do. Medicaid expansion makes fiscal sense. Montana's relatively modest investment into Medicaid pays for itself with budget savings from federal funds and larger tax receipts from Montanans who can go to work and not be sick. Medicaid is also critical to funding our mental health system, elderly care services, and protecting our children from disease and harm.

**2.** The 2023 Legislature fumbled an opportunity to stop the pandemic housing spike33333333 from spiking the property taxes of everyday Montanans, many on fixed incomes. Rather than adjust property taxes to keep homeowners from getting pinched, legislators cut income taxes for the wealthiest Montanans instead. Large businesses like railroads and mines have property tax protections that homeowners lack. That's unfair. I support a wide range of property tax reforms, such as expansion of the P-TAP program to the middle class, giving local governments more levers to generate revenue, and fixing the education funding formula to reduce dependence on mill levies.

**3.** Our legislators can do a lot to streamline our housing policy to increase housing supply and manage prices. We can enact wide-ranging zoning reform to reduce or eliminate minimal lot area requirements, simplify the permitting process, revisit building height limits, and support

more solutions beyond single-family housing such as duplexes, triplexes, and accessory dwelling units. We can reduce the burden of property taxes on housing prices by fixing our education funding formula and giving local governments more levers to generate revenue besides raising property taxes. I would support a program of offering down payment assistance to first-time homebuyers.

**4.** I have over a decade of experience of working in the courts and seeing the most personal of experiences the people of Billings go through. As an attorney, I am entrusted with confidential information, but what is important to my clients is not a secret. They care about their children deeply, they want to live in a good home, and they don't like being hosed by a government agency or a business that plays dirty. I knocked on thousands of doors last election cycle, and I'll knock on thousands more to make sure my constituents have their voices heard.

**5.** My family hunts elk every season. Hunting is part of Montana life and an important tool for wildlife conservation. I'll vote to protect our rights to hunt, fish, and recreate. Public lands need to stay in public hands. One reform I would support is returning wildlife management back to the professional experts at Montana FWP. Legislators should set general guidelines for hunting policy, but let professionals handle the details. Our Montana Constitution provides a right to a clean and healthful environment. Adopting energy policies to encourage a responsible transition to green power means greener fields, cleaner air, and better hunting.

## HOUSE DISTRICT 49

### Rudolf Haden – D



**Age:** 49

**Home:** Billings Heights

**Family:** Bachelor/  
never married

**Occupation:** Retired  
Navy Intelligence  
Officer

**Education:** MA, Defense & Strategic Studies from US Naval War College; BA, Political Science from University of Colorado at Boulder

**Contact information for voters:**  
PO Box 50665, Billings, MT 59105;  
RMHaden4MT@gmail.com

**1.** I would gladly vote to continue Medicaid expansion past 2025. Montanans, particularly rural folks, often struggle with accessing healthcare and with costs rising for most, if not all basic living expenses, people's need for healthcare is going to increase. Furthermore, many Montanans have been negatively affected from tax increases and no longer have the means to manage healthcare costs. Medicare expansion past 2025 helps the state manage these healthcare concerns.

**2.** We can expand property tax assistance programs. Under the Property Tax Assistance Program (PTAP), we can increase the income requirement and percentage. Also, we can expand the Montana Disabled Veteran Assistance Program (MDVP) to include all veterans with a 50% or higher disability rating. Separately, we can restructure the property tax so that homes under a certain value are taxed at a lower rate. The new calculations should be retroactive to 2024, and any surplus refund made available to the taxpayer via state tax form.

**3.** Montana's growth over the past few years has done little to improve most Montanans' ways of life. This is most evident in the cost of housing. Ultimately, we need a multitude of housing that is affordable to Montanans near our cities and towns. The state should be working with counties to understand how and where this can be done, and what the state can do to facilitate that need. Until housing construction improves, we should implement vouchers and subsidies to make housing more affordable. Working families must not be forced to leave the state due to housing costs.

**4.** True representation is accomplished through consistent and multifaceted voter communication. House District 49 is centered on

Billings West High School—where I often substitute teach. Many voters in my district send their children to that and other schools in the area. I learn a lot through talking with faculty and students. Additionally, I will visit with voters at every opportunity—community center, parks, sporting events, or their homes. Additionally, as an avid runner, I intend to organize some "FunRuns" with voters in my district. Exercise is a great way to break the ice and promote communication.

**5.** Generations of Montanans have survived and thrived based on access to our wildlife resources. It's therefore no surprise that the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks is critically important to Montana's way of life. Priority one is to improve communication with Montanans regarding how best we can preserve and improve wildlife resources. The more informed when we interact with our wildlife resources the better we are at preserving and protecting them. Next, the Department should hire and train more staff that can improve effectiveness with managing and enforcing requirements.

## HOUSE DISTRICT 52

### Carole Boerner – D



**Age:** 61, born and raised in Butte

**Occupation:** retired  
Captain of the U.S.  
Public Health Service  
spending career as an  
engineer for the Indian  
Health Service serving

Indigenous people in Montana and Wyoming.

**Education:** Master's degrees in Civil Engineering and Organization Development; certified personal development coach with a part-time practice helping people with their life struggles; protector of our public lands, avid hiker/backpacker

**Contact information for voters:**  
carole4mt@gmail.com

**1.** When we all do better, we all do better. Being a Montanan for my entire life, I'm saddened that we seem to have



forgotten about our fellows. While growing up, we looked out for our neighbors and they looked out for us. I was so proud of the 2015 legislature when they voted to expand Medicaid, looking out for our neighbors. I find it unfortunate how subsequent legislatures have played games with Medicaid access. Many Montanans depend on Medicaid. We need to make this expansion permanent and to explore changing the income rules.

2. It was pretty simple for the 2023 legislature. Stop acting like you know it all and listen to the Department of Revenue. Many politicians are looking out for their own interests—assuring their taxes are lowered. We’ve lost what it means to serve. So many in the Montana legislature are serving themselves.

3. First of all, don’t put a high-end housing contractor’s wife on a committee to explore affordable housing. Each community has different needs. The last few sessions have continued to strip local governments of their ability to implement policies and ordinances to assure their housing

needs are met. Reverse these decisions and let local governments address their needs. People are struggling to afford their basic needs of shelter and food. We’ve got to find ways to do better—subsidies may be one avenue.

4. I am happy to receive emails from the voters in my district. My suspicion is that most of the voters in my district have been hit hard with increases in property taxes, likely their biggest concern. The Governor’s neighbors in Helena are enduring a 25-30% increase in their property taxes while the Governor’s went down 6%.

5. Fish, Wildlife, and Parks have become a political punching bag for the Governor. Out-of-state big game hunters have more hunting privileges than Montanans who are hunting to feed their families. We need to get back to protecting Montanan’s hunting rights, providing funding for the State’s public lands, assure access to all public lands, and return the FWP management to the experienced professionals.



**Bill Mercer – R**

**Age:** 60

**Home:** Billings

**Family:** Married to Marci; we have two adult children

**Occupation:** Attorney; Holland & Hart LLP



**Education:** Billings Public Schools; B.A., University of Montana, 1986; M.P.A., Harvard University (John F. Kennedy School of Government), 1988; J.D., George Mason University School of Law, 1993.

**Contact information for voters:**

Email [bill.mercer@legmt.gov](mailto:bill.mercer@legmt.gov); Address: P.O. Box 2118, Billings, MT 59103; Phone number: 406 698-1671; Web page: [www.mercerforlegislature.com](http://www.mercerforlegislature.com)

1. I voted against renewing Medicaid Expansion in 2019 and would oppose its continuation in 2025. Medicaid Expansion, authorized by the “Affordable Care Act”, is another

example of Congress increasing spending that is unsustainable. Fourteen years later, over 85,000 Montanans are covered by Medicaid Expansion and another 137,000 are on legacy Medicaid. At points in the last two years, we have had more than a quarter of Montanans on Medicaid. As a limited government conservative, I am troubled by the gradual slide in the direction of national health insurance. Montana should return to its pre-Obamacare Medicaid program (without Medicaid Expansion).

2. There are 18 property tax classes, but Republican legislators in the 2023 session focused on relief to homeowners in Class 4. I sponsored House Bill 192, which included rebates up to \$ 1,000 on 2022 property taxes for homeowners who were Montana residents in 2021 and 2022 and occupied their primary residence for 7 months or more. The Legislature enacted a different bill with rebates up to \$ 675 in both 2023 and 2024. In 2023, 216,382 homeowners claimed the rebate. The Department of Revenue

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**MICHAEL HUMMERT**



**WHY WE NEED TO SEND JON TESTER HOME!**



I’m not a partisan person nor a practiced liar. It is time to come to the center and move our country forward. Trump may become the President and Tester has proven he can’t work with him; another four years will be wasted.

Jon voted no to a balanced budget amendment in 2011.

Yes, to every spending bill for war and death. Fought closing the Southern border during the Trump administration and left it wide-open during the Biden administration, what are we to think? He has no plan to save Social Security and Medicare that will be broke soon.

He has indebted our nation \$35 Trillion and enslaved our future generations, crushing their opportunities. Generated the silent tax of inflation that will never go away.

**How many bad decision and lies would you tolerate from an employee before you dismiss him?** There’s many more but I think this is enough. Both sides need to come together.

Pick up a Democrat ballot and make sure the June 4th primary is Jon Tester’s last election by voting for Michel Hummert.

Go to [mikeformt.com](http://mikeformt.com).

You don’t have to guess what I think and why, I tell you in plain English. Have the courage to question what you believe and why!

**Paid for by Michael Hummert for U.S. Senate**

notes that the rebates offset property tax increases for 73% of those who claimed them.

**3.** State government cannot “ensure” housing is affordable because the market is a function of supply and demand. The housing market issues experienced in Billings, most other urban areas of the state, and a subset of smaller communities was the subject of a number of bills in the 2023 Legislature. I supported some of those bills, but whether they will result in an appreciable increase in housing inventory and a significant reduction in housing costs is far from clear. I do not favor using state revenue paid by one taxpayer to subsidize the purchase of a house by another taxpayer.

**4.** The best opportunity to engage with constituents occurs while going door-to-door during the campaign. This is the first election since redistricting, so the campaign will present the first chance to hear from the subset of voters who I have not represented in the past.

**5.** I sponsored House Bill 190, the State Measurement for Accountable, Responsive, and Transparent Government Act (SMART), which requires all executive branch agencies to publish an annual plan to set forth goals, objectives, and performance measures. Before enactment of SMART, the State had no strategic planning requirement for agencies, except for DPHHS. I have reviewed the Wildlife Division’s portion of the FWP annual plan and will be working with colleagues to monitor the plan, which I agree with, in part. I think the Fish & Wildlife Commission has performed well with respect to wildlife management in 2023 and 2024.

## HOUSE DISTRICT 57

### Marty Malone – R



**Age:** 75

**Home:** My wife and I own a ranch near Pray

**Family:** Wife, Gayleen; two adult children with four grandchildren

**Occupation:** Previous occupations include 30 years as

MSU Extension Agent, eight years as a Park County Commissioner; two term member of Montana House of Representatives; six years Fleet Manager for Yellowstone Country Motors; 43 years ranching in Paradise Valley

#### Contact information for voters:

Maloneforhd57@gmail.com;  
Maloneforhd57.com; facebook.com/  
maloneforhd57

**1.** I would vote to continue Medicaid expansion. I have attended two seminars to fully understand the pro and cons of expansion. It ends up saving money for the state since it provides preventative medicine. It also provides medical services for entry level jobs that may not have employer supplied health insurance. This provides more incentive for businesses to expand the use of internships. It also provides a substantially better reimbursement rate to the state.

**2.** I would support limiting real estate valuation increases. The increased valuation needs to be no greater than the overall inflation rate. The large increase that homeowners experienced forced some families to eliminate basic needs. Also, local governments need to live within their means just like Montana families.

**3.** The 2023 Legislature addressed some of the zoning issues and housing regulations in the state that basically raised the development costs which in turn raised the new and existing home prices. Increased density is always an option for developers. Basically, the legislature needs to study the development costs. I do not support direct subsidies.

**4.** My goal is to listen to the people by attending meetings throughout the district and listening to their concerns. In past elections I spent many hours knocking on doors and communicating directly with the voting public. My district has changed this year due to redistricting, so I need spend more time on the new portion of district 57.

**5.** House District 57 has sufficient elk numbers to maintain a vigorous population. Unfortunately, many herds spend too much time on the valley floors. Not only does this impact

agricultural producers, I see more and more elk being killed on the highways. The present shoulder season is less than adequate to keep elk numbers at quota goals. FWP needs to find ways to increase the number of hunters in the field during the regular season. More flexibility in hunting season dates, encourage cow harvest, encourage more youth hunters, and work with landowners to increase hunting areas.

## HOUSE DISTRICT 59

### Marc Greendorfer – R



**Age:** 60

**Home:** Bozeman

**Family:** Wife and pets.

**Occupation:** Civil Rights Attorney

**Education:** BA, UC Davis; JD, Yeshiva University’s Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law.

#### Contact information for voters:

Marc4hd59@gmail.com

**1.** No. It hasn’t been effective and is costly.

**2.** My website has the full details on my plan, but in essence it is to cap all the assessed value of all primary residences at the purchase price for the home with a 1% per annum increase. This would not apply to any other real property other than primary residences.

**3.** No subsidies, as those simply create unintended consequences without solving the underlying problem. There should be less regulation of infill projects and secondary units. Supply and demand should be allowed to play out. Trying to game the market only creates greater problems without providing anything other than very short term solutions.

**4.** I will make sure that I always promptly respond to calls and emails, welcome district residents to my home to discuss their concerns and will answer all questions myself, rather than through staff or automated responses.

**5.** It is critical to preserve habitat, above and beyond any other policy. There has to be coordination between

those parts of state government that manage development and growth and FWP. The biggest threat to wildlife is not hunting pressure; it’s elimination or degradation of habitat, and that is something that other parts of state and local government have the biggest impact on. FWP must have a say on any development decisions that affect existing habitat and FWP should have authority to do more than just give input that is not binding.



### Ed Stafman – D

**Age:** 70

**Home:** Bozeman

**Family:** Married (40 years), two grown children, two dogs

**Occupation:** Rabbi Emeritus, formerly a

practicing attorney

**Education:** B.S. in Math; J.D., Law; M.A. (and A.B.D.) in Religion; Rabbinic ordination

**Contact information for voters:**  
edstafman@edstafmanformontana.com

**1.** YES. Medicaid expansion has substantially increased access to quality healthcare, leading to better health, employment and financial outcomes for Montanans. It brings millions of federal dollars into Montana, keeps our rural hospitals afloat, and creates many good paying Montana jobs. It helps children receive consistent healthcare so that problems are discovered and treated early, and it improves school readiness (I introduced HB850 which would have further boosted Medicaid health coverage for Montana children). It saves money by reducing emergency room visits, and leaves emergency rooms available to those in acute need. The continuation of Medicaid expansion is a high priority.

**2.** We must restore property tax fairness for Montana homeowners. Last session, property taxes skyrocketed while taxes for corporations, mines, utilities, and the wealthiest Montanans decreased. I introduced HB253 which



sought to prevent these extreme increases by allowing state mills to “float,” so that when property values increase, mills decrease and tax bills remain relatively constant. My bill also sought to create a homestead exemption for those living in their homes, shifting some of the burden back to corporations and second home owners. I also supported other similar Democratic proposals. I will continue to fight for property tax fairness for homeowners.

**3.** People are flocking to our last best place, making housing scarcer and more expensive. Last session, I supported increasing affordable housing by tax incentives to landlords, and low interest loans to builders, who create affordable housing. I also introduced HB909, which sought to extend a housing navigator program which had been successful in helping housing challenged individuals find affordable housing. Unfortunately, my bill was killed by the Republican supermajority. Finally, Bozeman is not Glendive is not Havre – we must empower local governments to deal effectively with affordable housing issues and stop infringing upon their ability to do so.

**4.** Two years ago, I knocked on nearly every door in my district. I asked about and listened to the concerns that folks shared. In many cases, I sponsored or supported bills addressing those concerns, such as protecting reproductive freedom, stemming the increases in property taxes, assuring accessible and affordable healthcare, and quality public schools. During the two sessions in which I have served, I’ve responded to all of the numerous phone calls and emails from constituents on issues important to them. I will knock on every door again this year and continue to respond to constituents who reach out.

**5.** Montana needs to continue investing in fish and wildlife habitat through programs like Habitat Montana. We also must be vigilant in protecting clean water from the impacts of subdivisions, mining, and other activities that can pollute ground and surface water. We must manage fishing and hunting to protect Montana’s outdoor heritage, giving priority to Montana residents.

## HOUSE DISTRICT 60

### Alanah Griffith – D



**Age:** 49

**Home:** Big Sky

**Family:** We are raising our 14-year-old son in Big Sky and my parents live in Four Corners.

**Occupation:** Attorney

**Education:** I have a B.A. in Philosophy and Psychology. I Graduated from University of Montana School of Law in 2002 with my J.D. with Honors

#### Contact information for voters:

Email: griffithformt@gmail.com; phone: 406-624-3585

**1.** Yes, Medicaid Expansion is simply closing a coverage gap at a net profit for the State of Montana. The Bureau of Business and Economic Research at University of Montana has consistently found that “Medicaid expansion increases health insurance coverage and healthcare access, improving individuals’ health and household’s financial health while creating thousands of jobs and millions in income for Montanans throughout the economy.” This program provides 100,000 Montanans with health insurance. That’s about 10% of our population. It is a win/win for everyone.

**2.** Many of us felt the sticker shock when we received our property taxes this year. Over the past couple of decades, there has been a shift in the tax burden, from utilities and industries to private landowners. While residential taxes rose 30% in Gallatin County, Montana Rail Link’s share dropped 22%. It used to be that utilities and industry shared a larger share of the tax pie. I believe that we have tipped the scales too much in their favor. We must move the needle back so industry can make a profit, but not on the backs of the people.

**3.** Living in Big Sky, we face this daily. Big Sky has a resort tax, which is partially used to fund our Community Housing Trust. Our Trust has created 52 affordable, owner-occupied condominiums, moved 111 short-term rentals into long-term housing, ensured

seven homes will always house local workers and this summer, will complete 25 low-income apartments for locals. The Governor’s task force identified subsidies as something that needs to be studied. I would suggest that we should look at using the bed tax, which mainly funds advertising Montana, to go to our local communities for programs like Big Sky’s Trust.

**4.** My phone number is my office phone, so people can call me any day. I answer all of the emails sent to my email. I am going to community events to meet and talk to people. I am attending counsel meetings, meeting with school district administrators and other local leaders. Most importantly, I am knocking on the doors of my district, talking to whomever answers the door. If no one answers, I leave my contact information and a personal note. I really want to hear from you. Please contact me with your thoughts.

**5.** For my district, I am hearing more concern about what the Montana Department of Transportation can do with regards to wildlife crossings over/under Highway 191. Anyone who drives 191 has seen elk, deer, bear, and other wildlife dead along the sides of our road, typically in the same areas, over and over. These collisions also result in lives lost and property damage. Montana State recently released an 11-state wildlife study that found wildlife crossings to be valuable and feasible and targeted sections along 191 for crossings. I would support the department regarding any funding requests they may have.

## HOUSE DISTRICT 65

### Brian Close – D



**Age:** 65

**Home:** Bozeman

**Family:** myself, my librarian wife, Beth, and trusty Lab, Sam

**Occupation:** Tax Attorney (37 years)

**Education:** University of Chicago. A.B. (General Honors, 1981); IIT-Chicago Kent Law School, J.D. 1986; New York University School of law, Tax LL.M. 1987; Montana State Masters in

History, 2000

#### Contact information for voters:

<https://brianclose4montana.net/>

**1.** Yes, I will vote for continuing the Medicaid expansion. The current situation is a scandal, with the governor knocking off disabled people and others using postcards in the mail. Medicaid is a good deal for the state, supports rural hospitals, and lowers overall health care costs

**2.** Simplest to reduce the tax rate as recommended by MTDOR in 2022. More complex, is to force MDOR to actually equalize all classes of property as required by the state constitution (which they have not done since 2017). Exemptions for low income for seniors and disabled should also be increased

**3.** In Bozeman, the market is the problem. In 2021 45% of all closings were in cash. So the governor’s reforms will not reduce prices. Quite the opposite. First, we need to update the housing authority statute (which was written in 1935) and incentive public social workforce housing on the Montgomery County model of self-sustaining mixed income housing. we should incentivize large employers (city, hospital, schools, university) to assist in supplying workforce housing. I am filing an amicus brief on this next week in the MAID case with the Supreme Court. (Copy attached)

**4.** I have knocked on hundreds of doors and will continue to do so. I will also form a citizens council made up of a cross section of the community (even Republicans).

**5.** Maintaining public access first and foremost. The department should rely on scientific expertise when making wildlife management decisions, not politics.



### Anja Wookey-Huffman – D



**Age:** 24

**Home:** Bozeman

**Occupation:** Server

**Education:** Graduated from Montana State University in 2021 with a B.S. in sociology and

a B.A. in political science.

**Contact information for voters:**

Email: [anja@anjaformontana.com](mailto:anja@anjaformontana.com);  
Social Media: @AnjaforMontana on  
Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter;  
Website: [anjaformontana.com](http://anjaformontana.com)

**1.** Yes. Medicaid expansion is a program that has proven to bolster local economies, support healthcare providers, and keep Montanans healthier than they would be without it. We should not just renew the program but continue to improve it. I will support removing a sunset date from the policy. Also, we need to ensure that Medicaid adequately reimburses providers for the services provided so that providers can stay open.

**2.** The state has the constitutional responsibility to “appraise, assess, and equalize the valuation of all property” (Article VIII, Sect. 3). Property taxes skyrocketed because values spiked, but the tax rates weren’t equalized during the 2023 legislative session. Since the property values increased and tax rates stayed the same, tax bills increased dramatically. I would support re-equalizing property tax rates to rebalance how much homeowners are charged without reducing the revenue collected by the state.

**3.** Housing affordability is a complex issue with multiple layers. Our state government should be working to ensure that policy supports communities being able to develop and support a livable future for their residents. I think the most important thing our state can do is make sure local governments are able to make decisions that can support sustainable growth of communities, leading to affordable housing for both homeowners and renters. At this point, I am open to considering subsidies as a possible solution. We need solutions that incentivize communities to provide affordable housing to residents.

**4.** I am running a community centered campaign. As much as I can, I am out knocking on doors in the district and engaging in direct conversation with voters about what issues are most directly impacting their lives. I attend community events to be present with

residents in and out of the district in conversation about the key issues our community is facing. I am running to represent the district, not myself, so I want to hear from residents in the district and use their perspectives to inform my legislative priorities.

**5.** It is important that our state properly manage the outdoor spaces and wilderness areas so that residents are able to continue to enjoy them. We should prioritize maintaining and improving management strategies that allow for hunting and recreation opportunities for residents, and manage the wildlife populations in ways that satisfy the needs of landowners and sportsmen and women. Especially with the changes in our climate with the warmer winters and drier summers we also need to maintain and improve our fisheries.

**SENATE DISTRICT 16****Perri A. Jacobs — R**

**Age:** I live 50 miles south of Malta

**Family:** husband Lee and furry children. We are the fourth generation on his family’s cattle ranch, which was homesteaded in March 1917.

**Education:** I have a Bachelor’s Degree in Agriculture Education and Animal Science from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and a Master’s of Public Administration from the University of Colorado-Colorado Springs.

**Contact information for voters:**  
[pajacobs406@gmail.com](mailto:pajacobs406@gmail.com) or 406-658-2516.

**1.** I could support Medicaid expansion if the state can make that happen within the bounds of our budget.

**2.** Montana’s rising property values are due to the free-market system in which they are bought and sold, as well as the historic rise in the number of people moving to Big Sky Country. Properties are appraised every 2 years, so it was to be expected that

taxes could rise. I believe the state was aware of the potential property tax increases. The Governor and the Department of Revenue should have worked with the legislature to change formulas and multipliers thus lowering taxes and still providing the income needed for local governments.

**3.** The legislature should partner with established organizations already in place working to address affordable housing to develop long term solutions. Those solutions could include rental subsidies to individuals, housing developers tax credit for building affordable rentals, and working with local government to revise zoning laws to include rental units and multifamily dwellings.

**4.** Communicating with the voters in my district while important will be a challenge as geographically SD 16 covers parts of 6 counties. I will utilize local newspapers by providing them with reports from the legislature. Currently I am available through email and phone and that will continue if elected. If elected social media will be more available to constituents.

**5.** Wildlife Management is a challenge in our large and diverse state. I believe that we need to continue to allow hunting as a tool to manage the population of deer and elk. We see areas of our state with too few and some with too many of each. We need to continue to work with Federal officials when it comes to grizzlies, wolves, and sage grouse as Montana population numbers are adequate. Montana FWP is also managing them as appropriate to foster and grow these populations.

**SENATE DISTRICT 21****Rae Peppers — D**

**Age:** 67

**Home:** 213 Alderson Creek Road, Lame Deer, MT 59043

**Family:** Five children, 17 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren

**Occupation:** Finance Manager/

HR Director, Northern Cheyenne Development Corp.

**Education:** B.S.-Business Admin/IT, MSU-Billings; Masters-Info Systems/Communications, MSU-Billings; Currently a graduate student, PhD Candidate, Indigenous & Rural Health, MSU-Bozeman.

**Contact information for voters:**  
406-697-0565; [badger497@gmail.com](mailto:badger497@gmail.com)

**1.** I have voted for it when I served in the MT House of Representatives, our people need Medicaid Expansion and deserve it.

**2.** That is a tough question, as a short-term solution-put income tax dollars toward property tax relief, such as revising House Bill 280, which would have offered a state income tax credit to homeowners making up to \$130,000 a year to reimburse them for a portion of their property tax bill.

**3.** Use the Tax increment financing (TIF) to fund affordable housing, meaning as improvements are made within a TIF district, the increases in its property tax revenue are used to pay for economic and community development projects within the district. These districts must specifically meet certain criteria for blight and infrastructure deficiencies that have discouraged or prohibited new investment.

**4.** I believe in one-on-one contact with constituents, participating in rallies, events, not from a distance, but by encouraging people to interact with you. Also, candidates should study the issues in their districts and take note of who their constituents are. In my district, Agriculture is one of the main industries.

**5.** Use Cannabis revenues to revitalize Montana’s State Wildlife Action plan, increasing opportunities for wildlife associated recreation and advance wildlife conservation education programs. Offer a legislative bill that would benefit all Montanans by boosting local economies and providing opportunities for all generations to enjoy the amazing state of Montana.



## SENATE DISTRICT 24

### Mark H. Nicholson – D



**Home:** I have lived in Billings for 20 years

**Family:** Laura R. Nicholson MD MPH and I married in 1985. We have raised three children including a foster child who has multiple disabilities.

**Occupation:** I am a retired psychiatrist

**Education:** Helena Senior High School 1972; BA in English from Carroll College, Helena, Montana 1976; MD from the University of Washington, Seattle, Washington 1985

**Contact information for voters:** Cell phone 406-698-7346; Email mark@DrNicholsonForMT.com

**1.** Continuing Medicaid expansion is the right thing to do for Montana's people, healthcare systems, economy

and the state budget.

Hard-working, low-wage Montanans deserve the access to the general medical care, mental health care and substance use treatment that Medicaid expansion provides.

Medicaid expansion keeps our urban hospitals and clinics financially healthy and our rural critical access hospitals alive.

It supports about 7,500 jobs and generates about \$475 million in personal income and \$700 million in economic activity.

Finally, between budget savings and increased tax receipts, Medicaid expansion more than pays for the state's investment.

**2.** The Montana legislature needs to decrease the residential property tax rate from 1.35 to 0.94 percent which the Department of Revenue advised in November 2022 and the Republican legislature and Republican governor ignored.

The Republicans' inaction continued a trend of shifting tax responsibilities away from industrial properties, which

corporations use to generate income, onto residential properties where people raise their families. This time, the residential share of total property taxes increased 5 percent and the industrial share decreased 5 percent.

Montana needs to go back to asking corporations to pay their fair share.

**3.** Many cities in Montana, Billings included, have a housing shortage. This has lead to households, even some with two full-time workers, being overburdened by housing costs. Some Montanans out of housing altogether.

I support alleviating some of the shortage by encouraging the building of more low-income rental housing. That will probably subsidies of some kind for developers willing to do that. This might include single room occupancy housing for some individuals.

We could further alleviate the situation by with loan subsidies for Montanan families who would otherwise be able to afford house payments until interest rates come down.

**4.** The most important skill a doctor

does is listening, for psychiatrists like me, doubly so. I intend to continue that practice in the legislature.

I am already knocking on doors to hear voters' concerns and I make my phone number and email available on my website.

While serving in the legislature, I hope to make every effort to attend to email messages and phone messages.

**5.** The legislature should set general guidelines for hunting, fishing and general wildlife policy but the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks should prioritize wildlife biology to achieve those goals. Overall, I would like to see robust game populations and those depend on robust habitat.

Habitat Montana has increased wildlife habitat and access for hunters and anglers through conservation easements. We should continue that successful program.

I am opposed to putting special hunting and fishing privileges up for sale. Anyone who wants to visit Montana to hunt or fish should have to play by the same rules we do.



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## SENATE DISTRICT 26

### Karen Lincoln – D



**Age:** 77

**Home:** 1736 Songbird Drive, Billings MT 59101

**Family:** Single—mother and grandmother

**Occupation:** Retired Social Scientist

**Education:** BA, Urban Studies, California State University at San Francisco, 1970

**Contact information for voters:** phone or text 406-210-1206; email: lyncolnforSD26@gmail.com; FB: Lyncoln for Montana Senate District 26; web: www.lyncolnformontana.com

**1.** Yes, I would not only vote to extend the existing Medicaid program past 2025, I would also advocate to reinstate those citizens who were dropped from the rolls for making administrative mistakes on their paperwork. Medicaid allows people to obtain medical services that keep them healthy, on the job, and able to care for their families. Medicaid payments help medical providers to stay in business, a critical issue in rural Montana.

**2.** The 2023 Legislature transferred the burden of property tax directly onto homeowners, reducing the burden on corporations – land owners but not necessarily residents. The Montana Budget & Policy Center estimates that residential property tax shifted from 38% of the total in 1994

to 58% of the total collected in 2023. The most effective way to solve the problem is to re-balance the burden and reduce the residential property tax rate from 1.35% to 0.94%, as the DOR recommended in 2021.

**3.** Building new affordable housing is a long-term investment while the need is immediate. Rising demand, land prices, construction costs, mortgage interest rates, homeowner insurance, and property taxes all affect the current market. I support programs that address each of these issues: promoting more mixed-use neighborhoods and smaller lot size and/or building set backs; offering state-backed low interest loan and insurance programs; and re-balancing the property tax formula will all help. I support subsidies in the near term.

Rental vouchers are safe and effective and the Section 8 program is very effective with lowering the rent on older homes.

**4.** I plan to begin my campaign with small neighborhood meetings arranged by local precinct officials to identify important issues. Senate District 26 is one the largest district in Billings with a full range of housing choices and lifestyles—from apartments in the southern part of the district to ranches up Highway 3. No one technique will ensure coverage, so I plan to keep current on issues using the Gazette and local TV news sources and by posting the question on my campaign website ([www.lyncolnformontana.com](http://www.lyncolnformontana.com)) and my facebook page (Lyncoln for Montana Senate District 26).

**5.** I appreciate the new law





requiring all residents over 12 to buy a 'Conservation License' to access state lands, including fishing access sites and wildlife management areas. I agree that adding these license fees to those already collected from fishermen and hunters will ensure that maintenance costs are shared by all users. FWP needs to continue to balance access to public lands with the interests of adjacent private property owners as demand for outdoor recreation increases.

## SENATE DISTRICT 27

### Chris Friedel – R

**Age:** 44

**Home:** Billings

**Family:** Married for 18 years with two children, 12 and 9

**Occupation:** General Manager of a Family

owned Business

**Education:** Montana Tech

**Contact information for voters:**

chris@chrisfriedel.com, 406-272-2245, www.chrisfriedel.com

**1.** I would reevaluate the current system to ensure we, as Montanans, get the best bang for our tax dollars. We, as legislators, need to sift through and find inefficiencies and non-cost-effective programs and carve them out to reduce the tax liability and increase the impact of what we use Medicaid for.

**2.** The most effective way would be to eliminate property tax and develop a more equitably taxing structure. For one, citizens would genuinely own their property without the threat of government confiscation for non-payment of their property taxes, and two, if everyone paid their fair share, the taxes, I believe, would decrease across the board.

**3.** In the 2023 legislative session, as the Chairman of Senate Local Government, I helped push through significant laws removing over-burdensome regulations that were causing substantial increases to the cost of building houses, which in turn

caused housing prices to be higher for the buyer. As for subsidizing, I think the better option would be to encourage the housing industry to invest in new and innovative ways to build homes, ultimately bringing house prices down and making housing more affordable for buyers. Lastly, as your senator, I will continue to find ways to make housing more affordable.

**4.** I have found multiple platforms, be it phone, email, Facebook, Twitter, and website, to name a few, to ensure anyone can reach me with their issues and concerns.

**5.** My FWP priorities would be providing more access for hunters and fishermen.



### Kathleen Gilluly – D

**Age:** 63

**Home:** live in Laurel and have spent most of my life in Yellowstone County.

**Family:** son Gene, an IBEW electrician

in Arizona; several grandchildren in Montana, including Casey, who grew up with me; and my siblings, two of whom live in Billings. Michael retired from the BPD, and Mary is a social services care manager at Billings Clinic. Our sister Margaret is a teacher in Texas. Our brother David is a farmer in Japan. I have several friends and a couple of dogs who I regard as family also.

**Occupation:** Although I have retired, I spent the past 15 years as a journalist and editor beginning at The Anaconda Leader and finishing at The Laurel Outlook. Prior to that, most of my working life was spent at non-profits. I also served four years of active duty in the U.S. Army.

**Contact information for voters:**

Kagilluly@yahoo.com, 406-559-0947, www.facebook.com/mtskywtchr

**1.** Medicaid is vital to the health of our populace, especially children and other vulnerable folks. I would vote to continue Medicaid expansion past 2025. The program not only sustains

much of our rural economy, it creates and supports thousands of jobs, all while expanding Montana's healthcare reach across the state and on Indian Reservations. Everyone benefits from a more comprehensive health delivery system. The best part is that the federal government contributes 90% of the funds for the program, infusing about \$900 million into the state annually.

**2.** While property taxes for homeowners have risen about 20%, industry has been given a pass. Overall, large industrial taxes have fallen. As an example, NWE, the state's largest taxpayer, saw a decrease of 20%, paying \$36 million less than the previous year. Reform of property evaluations need to be instituted, ensuring homeowners don't shoulder so much of the burden. To assist elderly and poor homeowners qualify for relief, I would support a system that automatically enrolls them based on their state income tax return or other proof of income.

**3.** Affordability and availability have created a housing crisis that isn't unique to Montana. I support using available tax credits to incentivize building more low-to-moderate income homes/apartments. A great example of the partnership between businesses and developers is the new apartment complex in Laurel, The Laurel Depot project was a collaboration between GL Development of Helena and the Montana Board of Housing. I also support putting funds in the hands of those who could most benefit—low-income folks trying to purchase homes—in the form of down payment assistance.

**4.** I would continue to visit with my constituents as I always have. I live in Laurel, shop in Laurel, attend events and am invested in the people of Laurel. When I was editor of The Laurel Outlook, my door was always open to folks, and that won't change. I will provide frequent updates to the newspaper and residents about issues, along with utilizing social media. During my campaign, I will speak to the voters in my district to learn more about their concerns and will ensure they have all my contact information.

**5.** Wildlife management in Montana should adhere to scientific best practices, be for the benefit of all citizens, and consider its effects on tourism and agriculture. As the human population grows and outdoor recreational activities on public lands surge, Montana must persist in minimizing threats to wildlife, maintaining stable populations, and addressing conflicts between wildlife and humans. This delicate balance must involve the preservation and improvement of wildlife habitats, as well as the promotion of sustainable fishing and hunting practices. Legislative policies should be informed by science and input from the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks to ensure alignment with these goals.

## SENATE DISTRICT 30

### Cora Neumann – D

**Age:** 49

**Home:** Grew up and based in Bozeman

**Family:** Live in Bozeman with my husband, two teenage children, as well as my mom, grandma, aunts and uncles

**Occupation:** Chief Community Health Officer, Native American Development Corporation

**Education:** PhD in public health and development (BA from University of New Mexico, Masters from Columbia University, Doctorate from University of Oxford)

**Contact information for voters:**

liz@coraformontana.com, www.coraformontana.com

**1.** Yes. The positive impact of Medicaid expansion is incalculable. There are approximately 90,000 Montanans — our friends and neighbors — who depend on the program for their health care. It has also been a lifeline to our rural hospitals. Medicaid expansion also makes sense economically. In 2022 alone it helped create over 7,500 new jobs and generated an estimated \$475 million in new personal income

for Montanans. Simply put continuing Medicaid expansion, and more specifically lifting the sunset, should be a no brainer for the 2025 Montana Legislature.

**2.** I appreciate this question as it acknowledges the state CAN reduce the property tax burden on Montanans. While there is no silver bullet bill to fixing the property tax crisis Montana finds itself in there are steps the legislature can take. For example, the 2023 Montana Legislative Session had a \$2.5 billion dollar budget surplus and failed to pass any meaningful, long-term solution to the crisis of rising property taxes. Additionally, one bill that was killed in the 2023 session would have established a tax credit so that property taxes never surpass a portion of household income. Montana homeowners deserve better from the legislature.

**3.** If we want Montana to stay Montana, we must increase access to housing for working families (the heartbeat of our communities), as well as for those who have cared for us, including seniors and veterans. The state can do this by returning flexibility to cities and counties so they can find solutions that work best for them – such as tax incentives for building affordable units, construction grants, and mandating inclusionary zoning such as **15%** affordable units. The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program is a great way to increase housing stock for those earning 60-80% of the area median income at no extra cost to the state, but it regularly faces funding shortages. LIHTC has great returns for our families and local economies, and should be expanded. We should also expand existing state programs like Down Payment Assistance, Housing Choice Voucher Programs, and emergency rental assistance programs.

**4.** I was raised in Bozeman (my family is from Wyoming and Colorado and we moved here when I was an infant). My mom was a young widow, and without affordable housing and this tight-knit community, we could never have settled here. Our community has changed a lot, but I know most Montanans, and those in my district,

still want the same things that keep our families strong and communities intact: good jobs, affordable housing and access to healthcare. I have spent time talking with constituents and will continue to do that while I am in Helena. While I may not be able to solve every problem, I can promise that I'll work to make sure SD 30 resident's voices are heard with both my votes and my bills.

**5.** Growing up, my family relied on hunting and fishing to help put food on the table, and the Gallatin, Bridger and Spanish Peaks ranges were our playground. In SD 30 (Gallatin County), FWP prioritizes managing the Gallatin Wildlife Management Area, maintaining winter habitat for elk and moose, supporting diverse wildlife, securing winter range, managing human-wildlife conflicts through the "Be Bear Aware" program, controlling Chronic Wasting Disease with check stations and sampling, and enforcing Stage-2 fire restrictions to prevent wildfires. I support all of these measures, and look forward to working with FWP to keep Montana public lands and wildlife healthy and accessible.

#### SENATE DISTRICT 48

**Anne Ross – D**

**Age:** 39

**Home:** Billings

**Family:** I live on the South Side of Billings with my husband and our two young boys.



My husband, Robert, is an electrician with I.B.E.W. LU 532, and I am a stay at home mom with businesses on the side. I grew up in Billings with three older siblings and parents who ran their own businesses: Mom is a CPA, and Dad is a retired Union HVAC Contractor. They both grew up on farms and my relatives still work the land on the high line. We are gardeners, makers, fixers, creators, and hard-working stock. My motto: dirty fingernails, happy heart!

**Occupation:** Artist at Light Bloomer Studios, LLC and Civil Discord

Cooperative, Owner/Property Manager for Roving Retreats, LLC, Mama Bear raising 2 conscientious young citizens and trying to be the best role model I can be. I have years of experience in service industry management and also worked as a Youth Case Manager and Care Manager for Youth Dynamics, INC during my time living in Bozeman.

**Education:** Bachelor's of Fine Arts with an emphasis in Painting and Coursework Equivalent to a Bachelor's of Science in Applied Psychology from Montana State University Bozeman. Certified Artist with the Montana Artrepreneur's Program.

**Contact information for voters:** electmom@annerossformontana.com; PO Box 30793 Billings, MT 59107; 406-647-0583; www.annerossformontana.com; instagram.com/anne.ross.4.mt

**1.** Yes. Medicaid expansion, 90% funded by the federal government, has helped Montana hospitals and care facilities stay open through recent economic and pandemic related setbacks. We have invested in the expansion of services due to the cost savings and bolstered our economy with good paying jobs around the state. Our aging population will be needing a lot more care in the coming decades. We need more long-term care facilities for mental health and the aging community through additional expenditures, which are made possible by the consistent annual influx of over \$900million in federal funds supporting healthcare access in Montana.

**2.** Property taxes have grown unconstitutionally higher for low-to-middle-income Montana residents and lower for the ultra-rich, large corporations and businesses. Let's lower the tax rate for homes as we historically have done when property values substantially increased. Business equipment and intangible tax exemptions, and plummeting business tax rates (that originally may have helped small Montana businesses thrive in the 90's) have

become distorted to a point where corporate giants are paying little to no taxes on their businesses compared to the immense profits and impacts on our ecology and demands for infrastructure that they produce. Let's make it fair again.

**3.** People cost our state more money through emergency services when they are homeless than when we invest in safe and reliable housing first. Montana faces major losses in our deficient affordable housing market in the near future as properties conclude their enforceable "Period of Affordability". In this market, it's difficult to prevent landlords from selling these properties for a high profit, dwindling the available supply. Let's invest more in things like housing trusts which offer stable sources of funding for new projects, updating housing in disrepair and helping affordable housing developers get federal incentives with up-front reimbursements for construction.

**4.** I will be knocking doors and providing my contact info to ensure the people I serve know me and know how to reach me. Listening to the people in my district will influence the way I make decisions in Helena, and if I am ever unsure how a certain decision will impact my constituents, I won't be afraid to reach out and ask for their input. I have my own set of morals and ideals for how I would like to see our government run and I am also aware that everything is nuanced and requires detailed consideration.

**5.** I appreciate the scientific experts in the field of Fish, Wildlife and Parks doing what they know and do best: preserving our amazing ecological resources for generations to come. It is important to also tap into the thousands of years of indigenous wisdom that came from their management of the land before us new settlers arrived. As someone who enjoys fishing, hiking, camping and photography in the great outdoors, maintaining public access and responsible use enforcement are essential. My hope is that recent savings from going digital on many things will open up funds for more essential field officers.