

2026

GENERAL ELECTION

VOTER RESOURCE GUIDE

INSIDE



IMPORTANT
DATES TO
REMEMBER



HOW TO
REGISTER
TO VOTE



KEY
ELECTIONS &
INITIATIVES

PUBLICATION BROUGHT TO
YOU IN PARTNERSHIP BY

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Montana



LEE ENTERPRISES OF MONTANA

Billings Gazette • Independent Record • Missoulian • The Montana Standard • Ravalli Republic



The Montana State
Capitol in Helena.

THOM BRIDGE,
INDEPENDENT RECORD

LEE MONTANA

2026 VOTER GUIDE

GENERAL ELECTION

LEE MONTANA

Welcome to the Lee Montana 2026 Voter Guide.

Elections play a direct role in shaping the communities we live in — from the cost of living and access to healthcare to how public lands are managed and how local governments make decisions. This guide is designed to help Montana voters make informed choices by providing clear, accessible information about the candidates seeking to represent them.

As the largest network of full-time journalists in the state, Lee Montana has been — and will continue to be — focused on the issues that matter most to Montanans. Our newsrooms connect people across the region with their public servants, business colleagues and neighbors. We dig into the issues, provide the data and report on the debates and decisions that affect people's daily lives.

At the local level, reporters in our Billings, Missoula, Helena, Butte and Hamilton newsrooms will serve as your eyes and ears as local races ramp up throughout 2026. That includes coverage of commission and city council seats, mill levies and more — the decisions that often have the most immediate impact on daily life. At the state level, the Montana State News Bureau will cover all major races while also keeping a close watch on key ballot measures.

This year's election features one of the nation's most closely watched Senate races, along with crowded eastern and western congressional contests and candidates across Montana vying for seats in the state Legislature. This guide will be available in print and online throughout the campaign season as a resource to help you understand who is running, what they stand for and how

to contact them before casting your vote.

How did we put this guide together?

For the general election, our goal was to give Montana voters a clearer picture of candidates in six races: U.S. Senate, Public Service Commission, the eastern and western congressional districts, and the state Legislature. For legislative races, we focused on contested races within Lee newsroom coverage areas across the state.

Editors at Lee Montana and the Montana State News Bureau developed six questions for each group of candidates, covering issues we know matter to voters, including affordability, taxes, public lands, wildlife management and health care. Those questions were sent to candidates using the email addresses listed on the Montana

Check your voter registration or register to vote at votemt.gov.

Important Voting Dates

Mail ballots mailed: Oct. 9

Last day to register to vote in General Election: Tuesday, Nov. 3rd by 8pm

Election Day: Tuesday, Nov. 3rd

Polling locations open, last day to return a mailed ballot

Secretary of State's candidate filing website.

Questionnaires went out in September, and candidates had about three weeks to respond. If a candidate in a contested race did not respond, declined to participate or submitted answers after the deadline, we note that in their entry. More than 150 individuals were invited to take part in this voter guide.

To help preserve trust in the process, we are publishing answers as they were submitted. Editors reviewed responses for length and minor issues such as grammar and profanity. Candidates were also asked to provide basic background information, including name, age, hometown, education, occupation and contact details. You'll also see a party label next to each candidate's name, as listed by the Secretary of State's office:

Rep — Republican
Dem — Democrat
Ind — Independent
Lib — Libertarian

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2026 General Election Voter Guide: The Questions

U.S. Senate

Question 1. What are the most pressing issues facing Montanans and how as a U.S. Senator would you address them?

Question 2. What regulations do you support that adequately balance community concerns about data centers and the prospect of economic opportunity promised by developers?

Question 3. What committees would you hope to serve on in the Senate and how would you use a seat at the table to benefit Montanans?

Question 4. What are three measures the federal government can take to address the affordability crisis?

Question 5. If Democrats take the House, the filibuster will play a key role in determining what legislation advances out of Congress. Would you vote to eliminate the filibuster?

Question 6. If elected, how would you work to protect and strengthen Social Security for older Americans, their children, and grandchildren?

US House 1st Congressional District

Question 1. What are the most pressing issues facing Montanans and how as a U.S. Representative would you address them?

Question 2. What regulations do you support that adequately balance community concerns about data centers and the prospect of economic opportunity promised by developers?

Question 3. Tens of thousands of constituents in this district receive health insurance through Medicaid. If elected, how would you ensure that people who rely on this program don't lose access to health care, especially as the provisions of the "big, beautiful bill" go into effect?

Question 4. What are three measures the federal government can take to address the affordability crisis?

Question 5. The war in Iran has passed the six-month mark. At what point do you believe military action requires approval from Congress, and have we reached that mark?

Question 6. If elected, how would you work to protect and strengthen Social Security for older Americans, their children, and grandchildren?

US House 2nd Congressional District

Question 1. What are the most pressing issues facing Montanans and how as a U.S. Representative would you address them?



THOM BRIDGE, INDEPENDENT RECORD

Voters wait in line to register to vote at the Flathead County elections office in Kalispell on Tuesday, Nov. 8, 2022.

Question 2. What regulations do you support that adequately balance community concerns about data centers and the prospect of economic opportunity promised by developers?

Question 3. Accessing health care can be particularly challenging for rural Montanans. As a US Representative, what policies would you support to improve access to quality health care in rural communities?

Question 4. What are three measures the federal government can take to address the affordability crisis?

Question 5. How can Congress support ranchers following President Trump's decision to expand foreign beef imports?

Question 6. If elected, how would you work to protect and strengthen Social Security for older Americans, their children, and grandchildren?

Public Service Commission

Question 1. What regulations do you support that adequately balance community concerns about data centers and the prospect of economic opportunity promised by developers?

Question 2. The PSC has been plagued by bad headlines in recent years. What changes would you support to restore

public trust in the commission and how it runs?

Question 3. There's a push by some Montana lawmakers to have the governor appoint members of the PSC rather than having the public elect them. Which do you believe is the best approach?

Question 4. What do you think is the best way to protect consumers from exorbitant power bill increases over the next four years?

Question 5. From the perspective of long-term costs to Montana customers, do you believe that NorthWestern Energy and other power utilities need to invest in more renewable energy sources such as wind and solar or do you believe that coal and natural gas should be given higher priority? Please explain your reasoning.

Question 6. What do you believe is the most important issue the PSC will address over the next term?

Montana Legislature

Question 1. What regulations do you support that adequately balance community concerns about data centers and the prospect of economic opportunity promised by developers?

Question 2. Federal changes to Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act marketplace are contributing to higher healthcare costs and more people being underinsured. What state policies would you support to protect healthcare access for Montanans?

Question 3. Enacting a flat income tax is a top priority for Gov. Greg Gianforte in the 2027 Legislature, which would cut revenues to the state's general fund. Would you support a flat income tax, and how would you consider its impact on Montana's budget?

Question 4. Intra-party fighting was a centerpiece of the last legislative session, and the divides have continued in the interim within both parties. What role, if any, should bipartisanship play in the Montana Legislature? Are there issues where you would look to collaborate with your colleagues across the aisle?

Question 5. Do you believe the Legislature needs to revisit the property tax package lawmakers passed last session? Why or why not?

Question 6. If elected, how would you work to protect Montanans from fraud and scams, including cryptocurrency scams?

U.S. SENATE



Kyle Austin (Lib)

Age: 43

Location: Billings

Education: Doctorate of Pharmacy

Occupation: Pharmacist and CEO of Pharm406

Contact information: www.kyleaustinmt.com

1. Montanans face rising costs, federal overreach, wasteful spending, unaffordable healthcare, and growing pressure on family farms and ranches. As a U.S. Senator, I would rein in big government by opposing unnecessary mandates, auditing federal agencies, eliminating duplicative programs, and demanding a balanced, transparent budget. I would strengthen our economy by lowering regulatory barriers, keeping taxes predictable, expanding reliable energy and infrastructure, and supporting small businesses and skilled trades. I would pursue patient-centered healthcare through price transparency, greater competition, lower healthcare costs, telehealth, and strong rural hospitals. For agriculture, I would fight for fair markets, honest labeling, dependable crop and livestock protections, expanded trade, water and grazing rights, active land management, and policies that keep farms and ranches in Montana families.

2. I support clear, enforceable rules requiring data-center developers to disclose their projected water and energy use, tax incentives, permanent job creation, effects on utility rates, and full economic and environmental impacts before receiving permits or public subsidies. Communities deserve independent impact studies, public hearings, binding conservation plans, and guarantees that taxpayers will not be left paying for infrastructure or cleanup. Above all, privacy must be protected through strict limits on data collection, sale, sharing, and government access; strong cybersecurity standards; prompt breach notification; regular audits; and meaningful penalties for misuse. No project should proceed unless it proves a lasting public benefit without compromising our water, land, power grid, or personal information. Data centers do not belong in Montana, they belong in the ocean.

3. I would seek seats on the Senate Committees on Indian Affairs; Energy and Natural Resources; and Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry. On Indian Affairs, I would work in partnership with Montana's tribal nations to strengthen self-determination, public safety, healthcare, housing, education, and

economic opportunity while protecting treaty obligations. On Energy and Natural Resources, I would defend Montana jobs, promote dependable and affordable energy, expand responsible resource development, improve forest management, protect public access, and ensure local voices guide decisions about our lands and water. On Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, I would fight for family farms and ranches, fair markets, strong crop and livestock protections, expanded trade, rural nutrition, water rights, and policies that keep agriculture profitable for the next generation. At every table, I would put Montana first.

4. First, the federal government should encourage local zoning reform by tying appropriate housing funds to faster permitting, more housing choices, and fewer barriers to construction—while keeping land-use decisions local and eliminating costly federal overreach that drives up housing, energy, and food prices. Second, we must improve foreign trade policies by negotiating fair, enforceable agreements, opening markets for American producers, securing critical supply chains, and confronting nations that cheat or subsidize exports unfairly. Third, we must overhaul healthcare by requiring price transparency, increasing competition, lowering prescription-drug costs, expanding telehealth and rural care, and removing mandates that inflate premiums. Affordability will improve when government stops picking winners, protects free and fair markets, and gives families more control over their money and choices

5. No

6. I would protect every benefit earned by today's seniors and workers nearing retirement while overhauling Social Security for future generations—without raising payroll taxes. We must reduce waste, strengthen oversight, promote economic growth, and make responsible long-term reforms that keep the program solvent. I would also support voluntary, individually owned retirement savings accounts for every worker, with automatic contributions, low fees, broad investment choices, and strong protections against political interference. These accounts should supplement—not replace—Social Security and remain the worker's property, allowing families to build wealth and pass unused savings to their heirs. By combining a secure Social Security foundation with personal control and disciplined saving, we can honor promises to older Americans while giving children and grandchildren greater freedom, ownership, and retirement security.



Alani Bankhead (Dem)

Age: 44

Location: Helena

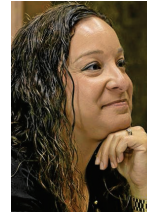
Education: BA, Crime, Law, and Justice - Penn

State University; BA, Latin American Studies, Minor in Military Studies - Penn State University; MS, International Relations, Concentration in

National Security - Troy University; USAF Air War College - Maxwell AFB, Alabama

Occupation: Law Enforcement/Military

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1. Getting healthcare, housing, gas, and grocery prices down. Stopping AI data centers. Restoring checks and balances in federal government as the founders intended. Holding the Epstein class accountable. We'll do it by getting corporations out of housing and healthcare, and incentivizing companies building affordable housing through tax incentives. Ending the illegal war in Iran will bring gas, diesel, and fertilizer prices down. I'd fight to stop opening our public lands to exploitation and sale, as our current federal delegation is trying to do. As a retired child sex crimes expert, I'd hold any government officials not fully disclosing or taking action to hold people in the Epstein Files accountable. I've put the Epstein class in handcuffs before, and I look forward to doing it again.

2. I am the only US Senate candidate against AI data centers, and I fully support immediately enacting a moratorium. Montana has a rich history of corporations coming in with promises of jobs then having those same corporations destroy the land, pollute our environment, and extract every dollar from here before the leave the state and taxpayers to clean up their mess. Over my dead body.

3. Budget Committee, Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, or Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs. Any committee that has to do with lowering costs for Montanans, increasing safety, and restoring public trust for Montanans is what I'd prefer to serve on.

4. 1) Stop corporations from being able to buy houses. Use anti-trust laws to break up big corporations that have a stranglehold on the markets such as the big four corporations that control our meat processing industry. Make the wealthy pay their fair share by instituting a wealth tax. 2) Raise the capital gains limit from \$250k to \$500k to allow people to sell homes without paying taxes. This would also

bring the prices of houses down with more inventory. 3) Stop the illegal war on Iran to bring gas, diesel, fertilizer, and everyday item prices down.

5. Yes

6. Remove the income limit on social security, so the wealthy pay their fair share. This will not only fully fund social security in perpetuity, but it will also support child care subsidies, caregiver pay, etc.



Seth Bodnar (Ind)

Age: 47

Location: Missoula

Education: United States Military Academy at West Point, Bachelor of Science in Economics, Truman Scholar, Rhodes Scholar; Hertford College, University of Oxford, Master of Science in



Economics and Social History and Master of Science in Comparative Social Policy
Occupation: Candidate for U.S. Senate
Contact information: www.sethformontana.com, info@sethformontana.com

1. Whether it's housing, groceries, health care, or gas, Montanans are facing higher costs across the board. I'm going to fight every day to make life more affordable, because if you work hard, you deserve to be able to put a roof over your family's head, access health care that actually provides the coverage you need, and afford food to feed your family. Politicians from both national political parties always promise that, so why hasn't it happened? Well, those politicians go to D.C. and fight for their political party, not for us. They pit us against each other, distract us with culture wars, and get rich off the corruption they enable instead of solving problems that would help us. I'm running as an Independent to end all that, and I'll never answer to a political party. Montanans deserve an Independent Senator who will fight for them, who will work with anyone when it benefits our state, and who will stand up to anyone when it doesn't.

2. I'm against any data center that raises our power bills by a single cent, threatens our water or wildlife, or moves forward without our local communities having the final say, period. I'll support the Ratepayer Protection Act to make sure data center energy costs never get passed onto Montana families, mandatory public disclosure of a project's water and energy use before permits are issued, and real local authority for communities to reject a project that threatens their water or land. Here's why neither party in D.C. has done anything about this: both parties are bankrolled

AARP Montana Releases 'How to Vote' Guide Ahead of November 3 General Election

Award-winning video PSA series simplifies Montana's voting process for voters statewide

Helena, Mont., Sept. 25, 2026 — With the state's election season in full swing, AARP Montana released its "How to Vote" guide to help voters understand key deadlines, requirements, and options for casting their ballot in the upcoming general election.

Voters age 50-plus are expected to remain a powerful voting bloc in Montana elections, consistently turning out at higher rates than younger voters. In the 2024 election, for example, 58.1% of the electorate was age 50-plus.

"As AARP Montana has done in previous election cycles, we've created an online voter resource guide to help Montanans stay informed about important election deadlines and any changes to the voting process," said Tim Summers, AARP Montana State Director.

"Knowing when, where, and how to vote can be challenging, and we want to make participation as easy as possible, especially for older Montanans. Voters age 50 and older have consistently made up a majority of Montana's general election electorate, and we expect that trend to continue in 2026. This guide is designed to help voters navigate the process with confidence and make their voices heard."

The Montana voting guide includes information on how to register, vote absentee, and what identification is required at the polls. It also



provides resources to locate polling places, view sample ballots or download a voter registration application. The guide will continue to be updated throughout the election season to reflect the most current information.

In addition, AARP Montana is promoting its award-winning "How to Vote" video PSA series, which helps break down Montana's voting laws into a simple, easy-to-understand format. The series has received national recognition, earning a Gold Viddy Award, Gold Hermes Creative Award and a Gold DotComm Award.

"Simple can sometimes be both elegant and powerful," said Summers. "This PSA series helps explain complex voting procedures by distilling Montana's voting laws into clear, straightforward steps that voters can follow with confidence."

The series includes three short videos:

1. How to Register to Vote in Montana's 2026 General Election

2. How to Vote by Mail in Montana's 2026 General Election

3. How to Vote in Person in Montana's 2026 General Election

"Voters have many options when it comes to casting their ballot," Summers added. "AARP wants to make sure they understand what those options are so they can make their voice heard." What to know about voting in Montana Montana voters should be aware of several key considerations heading into the 2026 election cycle:

- Updated legislative district maps may impact which candidates appear on a voter's ballot depending on their residence.
- A 2023 law requires voters previously registered in another county or state to provide prior registration information when registering in Montana. The law also makes it a crime to register in Montana while knowingly registered in another state.
- The Montana Supreme Court struck down several 2021 voting restrictions, maintaining same-day voter registration and certain absentee ballot practices.

Montanans can learn more about voting requirements and access the "How to Vote" guide and video series at aarp.org/MTvotes.

About AARP: AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering people 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With a nationwide presence, AARP strengthens communities and advocates for what matters most to the more than 100 million Americans 50-plus and their families: health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment. AARP also produces the nation's largest circulation publications: AARP The Magazine and AARP Bulletin. To learn more, visit www.aarp.org/about-aarp/, www.aarp.org/español or follow @AARP, @AARPenEspañol and @AARPadvocates on social media.

About AARP Montana: For over 50 years, AARP has been working right here in big sky country to improve the lives of Montanans 50 plus. As one of Montana's largest non-profit membership organizations, with more than 133,000 members, we advocate for what matters most to families: health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment. We're committed to helping already great communities across Montana become even better places for people of all ages to live and thrive by granting funds through our Community Challenge Grant Program. We fund small dollar, big impact projects in several categories, including transportation, safe streets, housing and public parks and trails.

We also connect Montanans with information and resources as well as help people connect with others who share their interests and passions – like music! As a main sponsor of the Helena Symphony's Masterworks Series, we're proud to help bring quality concerts to the community. By fighting on issues that matter most to Montana families and providing trusted information, we're helping empower Montanans to choose how they live as they age. As a nonpartisan organization, AARP does not endorse candidates for public office or make contributions to political action committees, campaigns or candidates. To learn more, visit www.aarp.org/MT or follow @AARPMontana on social media.

by the same Big Tech companies they're supposed to hold accountable. I don't take their money, and here's what that actually buys you: an Independent senator who can say no. Montanans shouldn't have to pay the price for decisions made by out-of-state corporations looking to profit off a state that's already been taken advantage of for too long.

3. As an Independent I can work with anyone when it's good for Montana, which means I'd focus on the committees where this state has the most at stake: Agriculture, Energy and Natural Resources, Indian Affairs, and Armed Services or Veterans' Affairs. On Agriculture, I'll fight for Montana farmers and ranchers: a full five-year Farm Bill, re-instating mandatory Country of Origin Labeling, and antitrust enforcement against the four companies that control 85 percent of meatpacking and the four companies that dominate the fertilizer supply. On Energy and Natural Resources, I'll push an all-of-the-above energy strategy and defend our public lands for future generations. On Indian Affairs, I'll honor treaty obligations as binding commitments and fight for Tribal communities. As a former Green Beret on the Veterans Affairs or Armed Services Committees, I'll fight to end the war in Iran, reverse VA staffing cuts, and fix the wait times Montana veterans face for care they've earned.

4. Right now our political system is so broken and corrupt that nothing gets done while life gets more expensive for all of us. First, we need to end the war in Iran that is costing taxpayers billions and jacking up prices on gas, and end chaotic trade wars hurting our farmers, ranchers, small businesses, and consumers. Second, we need immediate action to lower health care costs: expand Medicare's power to negotiate drug prices, hold pharmaceutical companies accountable, and defend Medicaid expansion, which has helped keep every rural hospital in Montana open. Third, we need aggressive action to make housing more affordable: cut red tape, create more incentives, make targeted investments in infrastructure, and strengthen rules stopping private equity firms from buying up single-family homes. To do this, we must stop the corruption in D.C.: ban stock trading by members of Congress, get dark money out of our elections, and stop Big Tech and other corporate monopolies from exploiting us.

5. Eliminating the filibuster won't fix our broken and corrupt political system. The problem is that we've lost the ability to find common ground because there is too much incentive in D.C. to fight and divide in the name of scoring political points. That is what has to change. That's why I'm running

as an Independent, because I believe Montana needs a leader that answers only to the people of this state, never to the whims of a political Party. It's why I've released a comprehensive political reform agenda to break the partisan stranglehold in Washington. It calls for term limits, a ban on stock trading, and an end to dark money in our elections. As Montana's Independent senator, my focus would be building a bloc of independent-minded senators willing to work across party lines to get real things done, rather than changing the rules simply because they're inconvenient to whichever party holds power at the moment.

6. As Montana's Independent senator, I'll never be beholden to Party bosses or special interests when it comes to protecting Social Security and maintaining the current eligibility age for every Montanan who's earned them. Montana seniors worked their whole lives and paid into this system, and they deserve to retire with real dignity. I support fairer contributions from the highest earners, so the program stays solid for the kids and grandkids counting on it decades from now. Social Security needs to be protected from Washington's budget fights entirely, it is a standalone promise this country made to every single American, rather than a bargaining chip in a shutdown negotiation or a tax package. Protecting this program means honoring that promise for every generation it touches.



Kurt Alme (Rep)

Age: 59

Location: Billings

Education: Custer County District High School (Miles City) – High School Diploma
University of Colorado, B.S. in Business, summa cum laude
Harvard Law School, J.D., cum laude



Occupation: Former: U.S. Attorney, District of Montana

Contact information: AlmeforSenate.com, info@almeforsenate.com

1. We need to make life more affordable, make our communities safer, and protect our Montana way of life. I'm the only candidate who has spearheaded two of the largest tax cuts in state history and balanced our state budget to make life more affordable. I'm the only candidate who has been endorsed by 34 sheriffs, has locked up violent criminals and drug dealers, and reduced violent crime to make our communities safer. As a Montana native, I will stand for common sense policies to protect our way of life. I

received an A rating from the NRA while my two liberal opponents received F ratings. I will also support our veterans and ag community, protect our public lands, keep boys out of girls' sports, and secure our borders and elections. I'm running because Montana is my home. My wife Sandra and I have a wonderful life here, and we want our kids and grandkids to have an even better life – with the same freedoms and even greater opportunities than we have.

2. First and foremost, as a native Montanan, I will always protect our state. If data center companies want to come here, they need to be transparent, clearly disclose their costs and impacts on our communities, and not cut corners. They also need to follow clear guardrails: they must pay their own way and create local jobs. They must protect our water and ensure there are no adverse impacts on water quality or other water users. And they must guarantee they will not increase electricity costs of Montana families. In fact, they should even help lower our electricity costs. If those conditions are met, they still must earn support from the community they wish to join. Local communities can balance the potential impacts against the opportunity for good-paying jobs and lower property taxes. As Senator, I will fight for transparency, clear guardrails, and ensure Montana voices are heard. And I will always put Montana first.

3. As Montana's Senator, I will fight to make life more affordable, make our communities safer, and protect our Montana way of life. I will seek committees that will help me deliver the best results for Montana. To help make our life more affordable, I will seek committees to rein in spending, keep taxes low, unleash responsible energy production, lower healthcare costs, and reduce regulations to build more housing. To help make our communities safer, I will seek committees to keep our borders secure, go after drug traffickers, expand drug treatment and prevention, and support law enforcement with the resources they need to do their job. To help protect our Montana way of life, I will seek committees to defend our Second Amendment rights, protect our public lands, and support our ag community and tribal partners. Mr. Bodnar says he won't caucus with either party. If so, he can't guarantee he will be assigned to any committees, leaving Montana severely unrepresented in the Senate.

4. As I talk with Montanans, they tell me they're struggling to make ends meet. Everything from gas and groceries to health care and housing costs too much. As Senator, making life more affordable will be my top priority. I'll fight to rein in Washington's reckless spending to lower

inflation, make groceries and everything else more affordable, and lower mortgage rates so more Montanans can afford to buy a home. I'll fight to keep taxes low to make paychecks bigger, like the tax cuts on Social Security, tips, and overtime that my two liberal opponents oppose. I'll fight to cut red tape to create more good-paying jobs and to unleash American energy to lower prices. Everyone promises to cut taxes and rein in spending, but I'm the only candidate in this race who has spearheaded two of the largest tax cuts in state history, balanced the state budget, and helped make Montana debt-free. That's my record, and as Senator, I'll bring it to Washington to do it again.

5. The Filibuster has stopped some bad ideas – like Democrat attempts to pack the Supreme Court. However, it should not be used to simply obstruct government and undermine the will of the vast majority of Americans. Since President Trump's re-election, Democrats have taken obstruction to a new level, causing the longest federal government shutdown in history. Democrats have also used the threat of a filibuster to block widely popular, commonsense proposals like Voter ID. This needs to stop. If Democrats won't support the will of so many Americans, then the Senate needs to stay in session and debate the bill until it passes. Let the American people see, day after day, which Senators are blocking the Voter ID that is supported by so many Americans and so critical to restoring confidence in our elections. Hold those who oppose Voter ID accountable to the American people. The Senate needs to persevere until it gets this important work done.

6. We made a promise to our seniors, like my mom. They paid into Social Security their whole working lives with the promise that those benefits would be there for them when they retire. We must keep our promise. Let me be clear: I will fight against any benefit cuts for seniors. We also need to protect the deduction for Social Security in the Working Families Tax Cuts Act passed by the Republicans last year, which my two liberal opponents opposed. As Senator, I will work together with anyone, Republican or Democrat, to strengthen Social Security, and I'd start where I've already delivered results as a federal prosecutor: stopping fraud. The Treasury Department estimates that as much as 10% of the federal budget is lost to waste, fraud, and abuse. By going after it, we can save those taxpayer dollars and strengthen Social Security. Also, as Budget Director, I balanced the state budget and helped make Montana debt-free. That's my record. I'm ready to go to Washington and do it again.



U.S. HOUSE 2ND CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Brian J. Miller (Dem)



Age: 54

Location: Helena

Education: Bachelor's Degree in Philosophy (Emory University, Atlanta) Juris Doctor (University of Montana)

Occupation: Attorney

Contact information:

www.miller4congress.com; brian@miller4congress.com

1. (1) High Gas, Diesel, and Grocery Prices. I would get us out of War in Iran and end price gouging from Big Oil companies; (2) Data Center Development. No consideration of any data centers until we are clear of the 6-year drought and know there is plenty of water for our farmers, ranchers, and communities. (3) Farm and Ranch crisis. I would fight to end the Canadian trade war, have mandatory country of original labelling, and stop Big Ag from price fixing and market manipulation. (4) Veterans' issues. I would fight to make it easier for combat vets to qualify for services, reduce wait times by increasing VA staffing, provide more assistance for vets that are struggling with addiction, homelessness, and other issues, and bring more accountability to the VA. (5) Affordability and Housing. Stop Northwestern Energy from jacking up everyone's rates (we should be running electricity on a co-op model to cost), and stop predatory practices by mobile home park owners who jack up lot rates

2. There cannot be any consideration of any data center development in Montana until we are well clear of the current drought and know that our water is in good shape. We are currently in the sixth year of a drought, and we don't know when it will end. Even after drought does end, it would take many years of strong precipitation before our aquifers would be recharged. But even if we did have water, and data centers were under consideration, I would still say there is no safe and good way to do this until this industry changes. Everywhere the data center industry goes, it causes nothing but headaches and problems for people, and any economic benefit is outweighed by all of the harms, such as increased electricity prices, pollution, increased surveillance, and the seizure of peoples' property by eminent domain to expand data centers and give them access to electricity for their ever-growing needs. Also, the technology

is going to change soon, making these data centers obsolete.

3. Congressman Troy Downing cut \$1 trillion dollars from Medicaid, and all of the Affordable Care Act subsidies; I would vote to immediately undo those cuts, and pay for it by undoing the \$1 trillion tax cut Troy gave to the 1%, and then levying some fair taxes on corporations. We also then need to look at increasing our Medicaid and Medicare reimbursement rates because so many of our rural providers rely on those sources of funding. We also need to provide better funding to attract more physicians to rural areas as well. I would also support policies to increase the use of medical technology systems, such as home health monitoring and telemedicine, to allow people in rural places to be able to consult with physicians and providers from their homes. There is actually quite a bit we can do with those technologies to help people with medicine at a distance, that hasn't been fully explored.

4. (1) Get out of the Middle East, because the war in Iran is causing gas and diesel prices to skyrocket, which is then making everything else more expensive. Also, the war in Iran is costing us hundreds of billions of dollars in defense spending at a time we cannot afford it. (2) Get control of the National Debt. Because we are over \$40T in debt, it is now costing us more to borrow money, so we must lower the national debt to get borrowing costs down. That requires us to restrain any deficit spending to no greater than 3% and increase our revenue from corporations and the wealthiest among us. (3) Enact Universal Healthcare for All Americans. Healthcare costs are some of the biggest drivers of the affordability crisis right now. We need to redesign the healthcare system so that profiteering is illegal and the system is run to cost, on a co-op model, while preserving patient choice, and allowing states to come up with different ways to implement the system.

5. Congressman Downing wants to increase our dependence on foreign beef, which would be the worst possible thing that we could do right now. I will oppose that. We need mandatory country of origin labelling so that consumers can choose to buy Montana beef. Congressman Downing does not support this, I do. Second, we need to enforce the Stockyards and Packers Act of 1921. This law, if enforced under modern regulatory changes, would eliminate price fixing and market manipulation that goes on right now in the Big Ag companies (Cargill, Tyson, JBS, and National Beef Packing Company). Another big difference here is that I oppose Big Ag, and Congressman Downing supports their efforts. In 1977, these big companies only controlled about 25% of the market, today they control 85%.

If we don't end their monopoly, they will drive the family ranches in Montana out of business, allowing private equity firms to buy the land and sell them to the highest bidder.

6. If Congress does nothing, Social Security will be insolvent in 2032 or 2034, and result in a 22% decrease in benefits. Now is the time for Congress to put aside the rhetoric and make sure this program remains solvent. There are several things that need to be examined in a bi-partisan manner. First, look at raising the retirement age. Second, increase the taxable maximum on SS benefits, perhaps up to 305K, instead of the 184,500 max at present. Send, broaden the tax base. I would like to see the top 10%, who currently hold 2/3rds of the National Net Worth, to contribute into the Social Security fund to help restore its solvency. Third, we also have to look at capping benefits for people who already enjoy significant wealth and don't actually need the program; they should, of course, still get something for their contributions, but we need to be pragmatic and make sure benefits for the most vulnerable do not expire. We may also need to look at modifying the COLA adjustments.



Dr. Michael Eisenhauer (Ind)



Age: 62

Location: Great Falls

Education: Medical Doctor (MD); Georgetown University, Master of Business Administration/Healthcare Administration (MBA), Univ of Texas-Dallas

Occupation: Physician/

Cardiologist, 24-year Veteran

Contact information: www.eisenhauerforcongress.com, Info@eisenhauerforcongress.com

1. Government should make it easier—not harder—for a Montana family to afford a decent life: Prices are climbing because of poor tariff policy, illegitimate wars, undeserved tax cuts benefiting corporations and the uber-wealthy, and bad changes in healthcare policy. I will work to expand housing supply and to increase wages through apprenticeships, vocational education, manufacturing and good-paying Montana jobs. A Montanan shouldn't have to choose between getting medical care and paying the mortgage: I believe access to quality, affordable health care is a basic right, but that we can achieve that goal without a single-payer system. We must improve and strengthen Medicare and Medicaid funding and modernize the ACA, while reducing administrative burdens and

lowering prescription-drug costs. Most importantly, I will bring an Independent voice to Washington, where the priority will be results oriented (and not party politics), while representing the needs of Montanans first.

2. Data centers should never be a one-way street; any decision to proceed must also provide a community benefit along with full disclosure of projected needs. I support LOCAL CONTROL and shared decision making. I support enforceable safeguards to give communities meaningful input and transparency. Require developers to pay for needed roads, transmission, water and other infrastructure. Protect grid reliability and prevent unreasonable increases in electricity costs. Protect drinking water, agriculture and existing water rights, especially in water-stressed areas. Require reasonable standards for noise, emissions, waste heat and other community impacts. Tie tax incentives to measurable jobs, investment and community improvement, with periodic reviews. Protect neighboring property owners from unreasonable impacts Montana should not give away its water, power, land or tax dollars without ensuring Montanans receive a fair return, and while protecting property rights of our neighbors.

3. Access to quality, affordable health care should not depend on your ZIP code. I will make protection of rural health care an absolute priority. Montana is a big state, but distance should never determine the quality of care you receive. We simply must keep rural hospitals and clinics financially viable by strengthening Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement, supporting critical-access hospitals, and developing sustainable rural health-care funding. We need to strengthen the rural health workforce by expanding medical and nursing training, loan-repayment programs, and other incentives for physicians and the entire health-care team to practice in rural communities. We must also expand telehealth to connect patients with specialists, while continuing to invest in local primary, emergency, maternity and behavioral health services. We can reduce unnecessary administrative burdens, so rural health facilities can spend more time caring for patients. I'm a Veteran, too – I know the mission.

4. Government can't solve every affordability problem, but it can stop making it worse. My goal is simple: lower costs, increase purchasing power, and ensure workers achieve a path to a secure future. Lower the cost of essential goods and services: Reduce healthcare and prescription costs. Eliminate unnecessary regulations and fees (tariffs) that drive up housing, energy, food and transportation costs. Use federal antitrust powers to

negotiate better prices where possible. End the illegitimate war in the Middle-East. Increase what working Montanans take home: Provide meaningful tax relief for working and middle-class families, expand apprenticeships and training, and incentivize businesses to create good-paying jobs. Increase the minimum wage. Increase supply and competition: Build more housing, support reliable and diverse energy production, and increase competition and transparency. Remove unnecessary barriers to responsible development while protecting consumers and communities.

5. 1. Strengthen competitive cattle markets. Improve market transparency and price reporting, enforce antitrust laws, and encourage greater competition in beef processing so ranchers have more buyers and negotiating power. PASS COUNTRY OF ORIGIN LABELING.
2. Strengthen the farm safety net. Fund effective livestock insurance and provide predictable, timely assistance for drought, wildfire and other disasters. PASS A FARM BILL.
3. Lower operating costs. Address feed, fuel, and equipment costs while investing in rural infrastructure, workforce development and transportation. PASS RIGHT TO REPAIR.
4. Protect water and grazing access. Invest in drought resilience, irrigation efficiency and watershed infrastructure while protecting established water rights. PROTECT WATER RESOURCES.
5. Preserve the family farm and the next generation. BLOCK CORPORATE TAKE-OVERS. Federal policy should help ranchers make a living from ranching—not become dependent on government assistance.
6. Social Security is a promise between generations. Older Americans have earned and paid for the benefits they depend on, and younger Americans deserve confidence that Social Security will still be there when they reach retirement themselves. An Independent Congressman can effectively work across party lines for a sustainable solution, without turning this into a political football. Protect current and near-term retirees. Do not cut benefits for those already retired or close to retirement, particularly for seniors who rely heavily on Social Security. Strengthen Social Security finances. Congress must address the projected funding shortfall, immediately. I support increasing the amount of wages subject to the payroll tax while protecting lower- and middle-income workers, along with other responsible revenue measures. ELIMINATE THE SALARY CAP. Improve efficiency and integrity. Make it easier to receive benefits while reducing fraud, improper payments and administrative waste.



Patrick Neal McCracken (Lib)



Age: 48
Location: Columbia Falls
Education: Billings West High School, Montana State University - Bachelor's Degree Earth Science
Occupation: Precious metals: bullion and rare coin sales. Husband, father, skier.

Contact information:

mccrackenformontana.com, patrick@mccrackenformontana.com, 406-260-7576,

1. War, debt, and inflation. Nearly every pressure on Montanans traces back to those.
 War: The Iran war, fought without authorization from Congress, drives up what you pay to fill the car. And it's our sons and daughters Washington sends to fight. I'll vote to reclaim Congress's constitutional authority over war.
 Debt: The national debt has passed \$40 trillion, all of it in our children's names. Every dollar borrowed today is a bill our kids will pay. I'll vote against budgets that borrow from the next generation, no matter which party writes them.
 Inflation: Deficit spending drives it, and families feel it in groceries, childcare, rent, and health insurance. There's too much month at the end of the money. Inflation is always a choice. I won't choose it.
 End the wars, stop the borrowing, and let Montana families keep what they earn. War, debt, inflation. That's the fight I'll take to Washington.

2. Communities should have a meaningful say before a data center breaks ground. Too often, these projects arrive with special tax breaks, little clarity on water use, and power deals hidden from ratepayers who may end up with higher bills. Montanans deserve to know who's behind a project and what it's for, whether cloud storage, AI, crypto, or government surveillance. Data centers should compete on equal terms: no special tax treatment and no eminent domain for their power lines. Developers should disclose water and energy use, protect existing water rights, account for what they discharge, and pay the full cost of the infrastructure they require. They should meet safety and environmental standards, post cleanup bonds, and stay off Forest Service and BLM land used for recreation. Congress shouldn't force projects on communities, subsidize them, or turn the Justice Department against states that govern themselves. Local residents should decide whether a project is right for them.

3. Rural Montanans shouldn't have to drive hours for care that local providers

could deliver. Too often, federal rules, licensing barriers, and billing bureaucracy stand in the way.

I'd support letting nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and other trained clinicians practice to the full extent of their training. I'd make telehealth permanent and easier to use, including across state lines. I'd cut the paperwork and regulations that make it hard for rural clinics, independent practices, and mobile services to open and stay open. I'd also remove obstacles to transporting patients to emergency and specialized care. And I'd give patients more control: clear prices, direct payment for care, and health savings accounts they own. I don't support a government-run, single-payer system. Washington can't deliver quality care by directing medical decisions from afar. The goal is more choices, fewer barriers, and care shaped by Montana patients and communities.

4. First, Congress should stop adding to the debt and inflation that erode every family's paycheck. Washington has piled up \$40 trillion, and families pay for it at the grocery store.

Second, it should remove federal barriers that make housing, energy, health care, and small businesses more expensive, from permitting delays to rules that keep rural clinics from opening. Third, it should end special subsidies and carve-outs that reward politically connected interests at taxpayers' expense, like the tax breaks handed to data center developers. Montana families need more competition, more choices, and less government-driven cost.

5. Congress should hear from ranchers and be honest about the import policy's effects. Cheap foreign beef during peak selling season helps foreign producers, not Montana families. Ranchers don't need price controls or subsidies; they need a fair chance to compete. Rebuilding the herd takes years, and ranchers won't hold back heifers if Washington floods the market with imports whenever prices rise. Stable trade policy lets the market reward rebuilding. Four companies dominate meatpacking; members of Congress should stop taking their money. Congress should restore country-of-origin labeling, pass the PRIME Act, let state-inspected Montana beef cross state lines, and make the direct-sales executive orders law. Congress should also reclaim its war powers: the Iran war has pushed diesel to record highs, and ranchers pay for it at every fill-up. American policy should put American producers first.

6. Protecting Social Security starts with telling the truth. The retirement trust fund runs dry in 2032, and unless Congress acts, every retiree faces an automatic 22% cut. Washington has seen this coming for decades and kept kicking the can. Today's benefits

are paid from our children's paychecks, and many younger workers doubt they'll ever see theirs. I'll keep every promise made to retirees and those near retirement. They paid in and planned their lives around it. For younger workers, I'd offer the option to own and invest part of their contributions, in accounts Washington can't raid. The quiet thief is inflation. Cost-of-living raises lag real costs, and Medicare premiums eat them up. Inflation is always a choice, and too many representatives have chosen it. I won't. And I'd make it easier for working Montanans to build their own retirement, with more room to save tax-free and no penalty for working while drawing benefits.



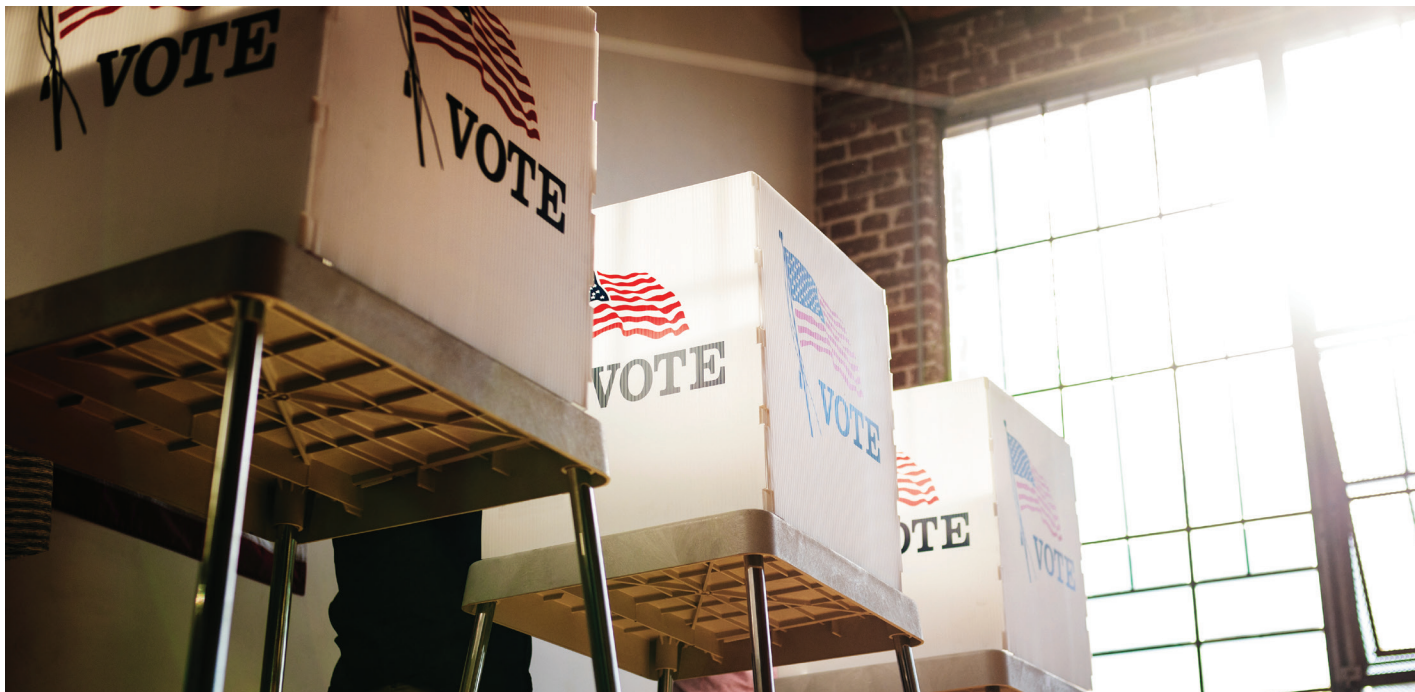
Troy Downing (Rep)



Age: 59
Location: Helena
Education: Bachelor's Degree in Applied Mathematics (computer science) from New York University
Occupation: Member of Congress

Contact information: troydowning.com, info@troydowning.com

1. Montanans consistently tell me they are concerned about the cost of living, the cost of health insurance, the cost of housing, access to clean drinking water, irrigation water, and clear rules of the road for our agricultural producers to access markets, afford inputs, and sell food for more than it costs to produce. In Congress, I helped pass the Working Families Tax Cuts, which was the largest tax cut in U.S. history. I will continue to work with the administration to ensure we have predictable markets to export our agriculture and will continue to be an advocate for fair and stable markets so that our ranchers are not negatively affected by populist policies coming from Washington. We passed one of the most comprehensive housing bills in a generation with our 21st Century Road To Housing Act, which became law this year. Indian Country was left out of the conversation. I introduced a bill to reauthorize the Native American Housing Assistance and Self Determination Act (NAHASDA). Our \$50 billion appropriation in the Rural Healthcare Transformation program will bring financial relief to our rural healthcare and critical access hospitals. I have introduced and cosponsored bills to bring funding to the St. Mary's River for much-needed deferred maintenance projects on the Milk River. My approach is simple: bring Montana-sized solutions to Washington, not blanket Washington solutions back to Montana.



2. These decisions should start at the local level. Data centers can bring investment and good-paying jobs to Montana while helping America stay ahead in the global AI race. Communities must be determinant regarding where data centers are built and how they operate. The federal government should take a light-touch approach. Developers should be responsible for the infrastructure demands they create, not existing ratepayers. Senior water rights in Montana are of paramount importance. These rights must be protected. I support clear, predictable rules that protect local communities and grid reliability without overregulating an industry that can bring real opportunity to Montana.

3. As I've traveled the district, I've made it a point to visit rural communities and critical access hospitals. I've seen firsthand that access to affordable health care remains one of the biggest challenges facing Montana. I supported the Rural Health Transformation Program, which is bringing more than \$200 million to Montana in FY2026 to strengthen rural health systems and expand access to care. I will continue working to strengthen rural hospitals and address the workforce shortages that make it harder for rural Montanans to get care close to home. We also need to make sure federal reimbursement rates reflect the realities of rural health care. Hospitals serving large geographic areas with smaller patient populations cannot be treated the same as major urban systems. Washington should give rural providers more flexibility and reduce unnecessary administrative burdens that take time away from patient care. Drawing on my experience as Montana's insurance commissioner, I also believe states need a stronger role in

protecting patients. That is why I introduced the PARTNERS Act, which would allow states to enforce existing federal Medicare Advantage requirements without creating new mandates. I also support reforms that bring more transparency to prescription drug pricing and protect programs like 340B for the rural hospitals and patients that rely on them.

4. First, we need to keep taxes low so Montanans can keep more of what they earn. Second, we need to unleash American energy and streamline permitting to bring down the cost of electricity, transportation, and manufacturing. Third, we need to increase housing supply by cutting unnecessary regulations and preserving the homes we already have. That is the approach I took with my Whole-Home Repairs Act, which helps states fund critical home repairs before small problems become expensive emergencies. It became law as part of the broader 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act.

5. American beef is the best in the world, and Montana ranchers deserve stability—not additional uncertainty from foreign imports. I joined several of my House colleagues in demanding transparency and assurances that imported beef meets the same rigorous food-safety and animal-health standards required of American producers. Congress must also lower production costs, expand domestic processing capacity, rebuild the American cattle herd, strengthen accurate labeling, and ensure foreign producers never receive an unfair advantage over Montana ranchers.

6. Social Security is a promise to Americans who worked hard and paid into the program throughout their lives.

I will protect benefits for current retirees and those approaching retirement while working to preserve the program for future generations.

That means rooting out waste, fraud, and abuse, improving customer service, growing our economy, and pursuing responsible solutions before automatic benefit reductions become unavoidable. I have also supported tax relief that allows qualifying seniors to keep more, if not all, of their Social Security income.



PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION DISTRICT 1

Note: One candidate running for Public Service Commission, Angeline Cheek (Dem), did not participate in the questionnaire.



Jeff Pattison (Rep)

Age: 66

Location: Glasgow

Education: College degree

Occupation: Agriculture

Contact information:

Pattisonformontana.com

1. Decommissioning or financial-assurance requirements. Water-use disclosure, monitoring, conservation, and treatment. Large-load tariffs ensuring the customer pays its own generation, transmission, and infrastructure costs. Contract protections against stranded costs if the facility closes. Demonstrated reliable power supply and

emergency operating plans.

2. I'm a bridge builder and believe that transparency is necessary for civility to thrive. Objective examples would be public access to meetings and records, understandable explanations of decisions, professional conduct, consistent attendance, conflict-of-interest disclosure, and decisions supported by the evidentiary record. Montana's Constitution expressly protects the public's right to observe government deliberations.

3. I believe that the five districts should have the right to choose their representatives. One person, the governor, can be influenced to put in someone who answers only to that appointment. Mess up or someone ups the buy and the commissioner is replaced as they serve at the pleasure of the one that appointed them not the people who are paying the bills. Historical research provides evidence that elected utility commissions can be more responsive to consumers and have been associated with lower residential rates.

4. A regulated utility generally receives an opportunity to recover prudent costs and earn a fair return; it is not guaranteed a particular profit. I will ask hard questions and demand real answers. Relevant PSC considerations include prudence, necessity, cost allocation, service quality, lower-cost alternatives, and whether shareholders or customers should bear particular risks. The PSC describes rate-setting as a detailed examination of utility financial information and expected costs.

5. We have some of the best renewable energy, hydropower, that could be expanded. Subsidies directly influence what is being built. The stronger factual distinction is that wind and solar are variable resources, while coal, natural gas, nuclear, and some hydro provide dispatchable capacity. There are other sources such as SMR's and geothermal that could provide energy as well. I think technology is increasingly being developed that would find even more efficient energy sources. Coal and natural gas have and will continue to be used and I believe are more efficient than previous generations. I also think that the jobs and economic opportunities are better benefits too.

6. The large data centers, especially AI data centers. Who pays, what do they consume, is there enough information to protect Montana citizens from any harm? We have data centers already in Montana so is it megawatt, kilowatt, or gigawatt? Kilowatts, megawatts, and gigawatts measure instantaneous power demand. Kilowatt-hours, megawatt-hours, and gigawatt-hours measure electricity consumed over time. It does make a difference. Education and transparency are really needed.



SENATE DISTRICT 18

Note: Both candidates for SD 18, Greg Kmetz (Rep) and Stan Taylor (Dem) did not participate in this questionnaire.



SENATE DISTRICT 19

Note: Candidate for SD 19, Deanna J Daigrepoint (Dem) did not participate in this questionnaire.

Chris Rindal (Rep)



Age: 55
Location: Lewistown
Education: B.S. Animal Science - MSU -1993
Occupation: Business Owner
Contact information: rindal4senate@gmail.com

1. We need to make sure that there is no impact to water or power rate for citizens.
2. We need to know why we pay the highest prescription prices in the developed word. We need transparent pricing for medical procedures in advance. Policies that encourage competition amongst insurance providers.
3. I DO support a flat income tax. It's the governor's responsibility to submit a balanced budget to the Legislature. We need to be competitive with neighboring states if we want to be a place where people can afford to live.
4. I will ALWAYS support good policy no matter which side of the aisle it comes from. We are ultimately all Montanans. We need to support our schools, rural medical centers, agriculture and industry, while looking for ways to make sure there is future here for our kids. The nasty fighting has to be replaced with statesmanship - and the ability to work together on the vast majority of issues in which we all agree - and on other issues disagree agreeably.
5. Not if it means telling 80 percent of Montanans that they need to pay more taxes for their primary residence.
6. We need to provide safeguards in the form of consumer education and regulation where it is lacking.



SENATE DISTRICT 22

Note: Candidate for SD 22, Daniel Zolnikov (Rep) did not participate in this questionnaire.

Eli Tidswell (Write-in)



Age: 22
Location: Billings
Education: Billings Senior High
Occupation: Real Estate Agent
Contact information: elijahtidswellformt@gmail.com

1. This is the most important question for Montana, and the country, right now. It's also one of the biggest reasons I decided to run as a write-in candidate for Senate District 22. Senator Daniel Zolnikov has consistently put data center developers ahead of Montana communities. He supported giving data centers a special 0.9% tax rate while Montana families and local businesses continue to carry the tax burden. That special treatment needs to end. Data centers should play by the same rules as everyone else. Zolnikov also pushed his so called "Right to Compute" law, limiting local governments ability to respond to major data center projects. That is backwards. Montanans deserve a voice in what gets built in their neighborhoods. Next session, we need to repeal the "Right to Compute" Act and eliminate the tax shift that gives data centers special treatment. Montana families shouldn't have to pick up the bill for these experiments.
2. While healthcare hubs like Billings are usually well served, rural Montanans often struggle to get the care they need. Montana has recently been given roughly \$200 million from the federal government through the Rural Health Transformation Program, and we need to make sure that money is allocated properly and actually reaches the Montanans who need care. Rural hospitals are the backbone of Montana. We need to be hyper-focused on recruiting and retaining healthcare providers and expanding access to care in communities that are struggling to keep healthcare services available.

3. I think Montanans should be able to keep more of the money they work hard to earn. However, we have to be responsible with the state budget. I want to make sure any tax cut is sustainable and doesn't just result in higher taxes in another category. I'm supportive of the idea of a flat income tax, but ultimately it depends on what the final bill looks like. We need to look for ways to cut unnecessary spending and make government live within its means. We can lower taxes and still fund the core services Montanans depend on. It just takes some much needed discipline in Helena.

4. As a write-in candidate, I believe my campaign has demonstrated that bipartisanship is possible when you focus on people rather than party labels. I have received support from people across the political spectrum who may not agree on everything but agree that Montana needs legislators who will listen and put their communities first. In the Legislature, I would look for common ground on issues like government transparency, protecting private property rights, making Montana more affordable, improving infrastructure, and preserving meaningful local control. I believe voters are tired of political fighting for the sake of political fighting. I'm running as a write-in because I believe we can do politics differently.

5. While there were parts of the property tax package that were beneficial to the majority of Montanans, there were also some major oversights, and I believe it needs to be looked at again. Many Montanans did see their assessed values increase this year, which can lead to higher property taxes. However, the amount of revenue actually collected is largely determined at the local level by cities, counties, and other taxing jurisdictions. We need to make sure the state is providing meaningful relief while also addressing the local spending and mill levies that drive property tax bills higher.

6. As a real estate agent, I've seen firsthand how fraud and scams can affect people during the process of buying a home. For most Montanans, a home is the largest purchase they will ever make, and a fraudulent wire transfer, fake email, or stolen identity can have devastating consequences. I believe education is the most important step in preventing fraud, and our State Auditor's Office has done a great job increasing public awareness in recent years. We should continue building on that work by educating Montanans about common scams and warning signs, particularly when large financial transactions are involved.



SENATE DISTRICT 23

Note: Candidate for SD 23, Joanna Oblander (Rep) did not participate in this questionnaire.

Emma Kerr-Carpenter (Dem)



Age: 37
Location: Billings
Education: Bachelors from Boston University, 2012
Occupation: Stay-at-home mom
Contact information: emmaformontana@gmail.com, www.emmaformontana.org, 406-894-0377

1. I have concerns about data centers not paying their fair share for electricity, raising our electric bills, wasting water, and being noisy neighbors. While knocking on doors this year, I've heard more opposition to data centers than any other issue since I began serving in the Legislature. Data center developers are trying to develop projects as quickly as possible. I support a moratorium to slow everything down. As a state legislator, I would like time to get enforceable regulations in place to mitigate the impacts of these projects and spread the benefits to as many people as possible. Data centers should be required to lower people's electric bills while paying their own way for energy and electric grid improvements, build using a skilled, local, union workforce, conserve water, and consult with local communities. This technology isn't so urgent that we have to throw out all of our values to make way for it. We can do this the right way and protect communities and ratepayers.

2. We need to make it easier to afford medical care, not harder. You should not have to put off seeing a doctor because of money. Being healthy enough to see our children become adults or chase after your grandkids should not be a privilege of wealth. If you qualify for Medicaid, signing up should be straightforward and renewing your coverage should be simple and efficient. We should also fully fund provider services to ensure that state Medicaid continues to be a robust, genuinely life-changing opportunity for people to get the medical, behavioral, and mental health care they need in the communities where they live. That means adequately funding health care providers in rural communities. We can also address the gaps in the ACA marketplace by expanding eligibility for Medicaid, incentivizing employers to put more employees on their health plans, and by putting state dollars into the ACA marketplace to make up for the lost Federal dollars.





3. I oppose the Governor's flat tax because it is plainly unfair. Middle and lower-income people and families would receive far less of the benefit than the super-rich. And we would also feel the pinch when there is inevitably less state money available for things like roads, schools, and healthcare.

4. I firmly believe that I represent everyone in my district equally, regardless of political party. And as a Democrat representing Billings, I've always had to build strong relationships with my Republican colleagues. I've had many instances where I have found an unexpected ally. Our agreement on one issue became the basis for a working relationship that spanned other topics, from criminal justice reform to insurance reform to energy policy. At the end of the day, legislators all agree on one thing: we care about Montana. We fail at our job unless we figure out how to make things work better for everyone. Luckily, a number of my Republican colleagues agree.

5. The legislature needs to revisit the property tax package passed last session. Although I support the valuable tax relief this provides for many Montanans on fixed incomes, I oppose the way these changes were made because they unfairly and unnecessarily burden the City of Billings and are now hampering the cost-effective delivery of essential public services in our community. For the benefit of our city and the small and medium-sized businesses located here, we need to strike a different balance to achieve the real goal: a fair and sustainable tax structure.

6. I know for a fact that financial scams have plagued constituents in my district. It's tragic to see the damage they leave in their wake, but the state can make a difference. Montana needs to get much more serious about educating everyone, from our youth to our elders, about what these schemes look like, how they work, and what to do if a loved one becomes a victim. There should be mandatory training for folks who work

in banking and finance to be the first line of defense. Adult protective services can receive more resources to support adults who might be particularly vulnerable. We also need to take a deep dive into our laws and make sure that law enforcement has the authority and tools to quickly and confidently prosecute these cases.



SENATE DISTRICT 25

Julie Hippler (Dem)



Age: 64
Location: Billings
Education: I earned a Bachelor of Science in Special Education from Illinois State University & a Master of Education from Montana State University-Billings

Occupation: Retired Public School Teacher
Contact information: www.hipplerformontana.com, info@hipplerformontana.com

1. I am concerned about the lack of transparency in the process of building data centers in our state. I am advocating for a moratorium on building data centers in Montana until environmental impact statements can show that our groundwater, air and soil will be protected and that sound levels will not harm livestock or landowners. I am also extremely concerned about the impact to our power grid due to the large amount of power needed that NW Energy is not able to provide without large scale building. All of this, without any guarantee that local ratepayers won't be footing the bill for the upgrades. At the very least, the company building and running the data centers should pay for the increased energy usage and prove they have a plan to avoid negative environmental impacts.

2. I support policies that extend state funding for access to health care to offset some of the federal cuts. This would involve more state help to reduce premiums for people with low incomes buying coverage through the Affordable Care Act (ACA) marketplaces. The Medicaid work requirements implemented 6 months early in Montana will definitely harm our vulnerable citizens and thousands of seniors, people with disabilities and lower income individuals will lose their healthcare. Without those Medicaid payments, hospitals and senior care facilities will struggle to stay open, which will negatively affect the Billings economy. I would like to see a program that is designed (and funded by the state) to help vulnerable citizens (and those without computers) complete the unnecessary paperwork to prove eligibility. Funding organizations like the Alliance on Aging or other non-profits so that they can help people complete the necessary paperwork without losing healthcare while waiting.

3. I do not support a flat tax because it negatively affects lower income earners. They end up paying a much larger percentage of their income compared to higher wage earners. We have already seen cuts to essential services like public safety, public health and public education with

negative consequences. Any decreased funding to our state revenue is a bad idea and will harm our citizens.

4. I believe a strong Democracy requires compromise and consensus. If elected, I will always look for ways to work with all legislators to find common ground for the good of our state. Montana has a long history of bipartisanship and as I am canvassing with people in my district I am finding that people from both parties and those that identify as Independent agree on 60%-70% of the issues that actually affect them. A wise person told me that a legislator's job is to vote their conscience first, their constituents' wishes next and their caucus is after that. Ultimately, I will be responding to the needs of the constituents in my district.

5. Yes, I believe Montana needs permanent property tax reform so that homeowners and seniors aren't carrying the burden while corporations get tax abatements and the ultra-wealthy enjoy tax breaks. One-time tax rebates are not helpful to the majority of taxpayers in Montana.

6. I would consider meeting with bankers, credit unions, the State Auditor, law enforcement and other stakeholders to form legislation to protect consumers in Montana.

JEREMIAH

JABS

HOUSE DISTRICT 42

**MONTANA IS THE BEST PLACE,
NOT 'THE LAST BEST PLACE'.**

Paid for by Jeremiah Jabs for MT, R, HC 36 Box 2286, Hardin, MT 59034



Dennis Lenz (Rep)



Age: 64

Location: Billings

Education: Certificate in Ranch Management - Texas Christian University, Certificate of Pastoral Ministry - Yellowstone Valley Bible Institute

Occupation: Retired

Fireman/Farmer

Contact information: DennisLenz.com, lenz4legislature@outlook.com, Dennis.Lenz@legmt.gov

1. The economic opportunity that data centers may provide should not come with a negative impact to either Montanans pocketbooks or to the environment. This may mean that data centers need to bring their own power plants that provide energy to these centers, and it will certainly require laws that keep the water cooling needs of these centers from polluting our surface and underground water. I will support laws that do this.

2. There is truly not enough space for this question. Government interference has raised prices in both healthcare and insurance. The result has been less access, less doctors, less coverage and less insurers. We are losing another health insurance provider this year, which will leave our state with essentially only one insurer. We have some hospitals in this state that try to do the best job they can within this tight situation and they truly are amazing - working to cut costs, support their staff and take care of people the best they can. In other hospitals, controlling costs never crosses their mind as they scramble for the next government dollar. In spite of all this, I will continue to support policies that create a sustainable healthcare system for our Montana families.

3. A flat income tax would keep more money in the pockets of Montanans. This is not a massive impact to the state budget. We should care how hard it is for Montana families to make ends meet in their budgets, and this would help.

4. Many people like to think if you have one person (or a few) from the opposite party support your legislation, that it is bipartisan. However, true bipartisanship is when a large group from each side comes together for the good of Montana. I have worked many years in Human Services committees and have found that there is often a lot of agreement between the parties as to how we care for and help the needy, disabled, elderly and the children in our state. For instance, we have agreed



on many bills that helped in the child protective service and foster care arena. I will continue to work and find as much agreement as I can, and as a consequence, move forward legislation that can be helpful to Montana.

5. Yes. As if property tax wasn't already complicated, this made it worse.

6. Yes. I would support anything that targets these scammers. Particularly because these scams impact the elderly and other people who often have no money to spare.



SENATE DISTRICT 28

Note: Both candidates for SD 28, Kelly Hale (Dem) and Forrest J Mandeville (Rep) did not participate in this questionnaire.



HOUSE DISTRICT 34

Note: One candidate for HD 34, Jasmine Erickson (Dem), did not participate in this questionnaire

Jerry Schillinger (Rep)



Age: 71

Location: Circle

Education: B.S. Accounting CPA

Occupation: Farmer

Contact information: 406-974-2478, jerry.schillinger@legmt.gov

1. Adequate siting setbacks that respect adjoining property owners. All issues specific to that industry pro or con need to be considered and balanced in the permitting process.

2. Almost every government program of any sort drives up costs. Medicaid is no exception. Any time you make something artificially cheap, it encourages over consumption, driving up costs for other consumers. Having insurance, even poor insurance, is often confused with having Healthcare. More focus on healthy lifestyles rather than trying to medicate away poor lifestyle choices.

3. I do support a flat income tax. I expect the economy to continue to grow as it has after previous income tax cuts that I have voted for. If budget reductions are necessary in the short term, I would support that as well.

4. Many issues are settled in a bipartisan fashion in the Montana Legislature. Other issues are clearly battled along ideological lines, that is why we have elections. Conflicts arise intraparty primarily when individuals don't vote in the legislature the same as they represent themselves to their voters.

5. Yes. A progressive property residential tax rate is un-American and immoral. There were no tax cuts only shifts. Actual tax collections increased by over \$100,000,000 per year. Who pays? Ultimately, you do. Utilities, pipelines, railroads, any business that can, passes higher costs on. A secret sales tax.

6. Legislative we need to provide practical safeguards. Realistically, the best safeguards have to be taken individually. Serious penalties are also a tool.



HOUSE DISTRICT 35

Note: One candidate for HD 35, Gary Parry (Rep), did not participate in this questionnaire

Natalie Parker (DEM)



Age: 69

Location: Colstrip

Education: Master of Music in Music Education-Boston University, B.A. German/Music Minor - Montana State University

Occupation: Retired Music Teacher

Contact information: <https://parker4mt.com>, parker.singer@gmail.com, 406-740-3916

1. A two-year moratorium on large-scale data centers is a practical solution to protect Montanans. County Commissioners, City Managers, Mayors and the Public should be involved in any decisions that have a major impact on the environment and economy.

2. Healthcare for all Montanans is the ultimate solution to ensure people get the medical care they need. First steps are to protect Medicaid, which keeps Medicare cuts at bay. Funds from the federal government set to expand telehealth services in rural Montana will be helpful, but fall short. We need rural hospitals and clinics staffed with doctors, nurses, real help in emergencies. Medical personnel trained in preventative care saves money in the long run and such care cannot be replaced by a

doctor via zoom. Any available funds the Governor can access NOW should be used to stem cuts coming in 2027 from the Big Ugly Bill. Montanans do not believe in cutting people off from healthcare.

3. A flat tax does not benefit middle and lower income families. It would send our general fund into a tail-spin further cutting services for the elderly and the poor first. If you wish to decimate government this would be a great first step. A flat tax is equal, but not fair.

4. Bipartisanship is the bedrock of good government. It is appalling that Republicans have tried to punish members who work across the aisle. Montanans work together to get things done. Once elected legislators MUST work with the other side. We are all neighbors.

5. The current property tax package benefits the rich, puts a burden on the elderly, and inhibits young families who want to buy their own home. Yes, we can do better.

6. Funding government programs set-up to protect us would be a good start to protect Montanans. Cryptocurrency should be tightly regulated, because it currently operates with few protections. Even banks are asking for oversight, it's like the wild west.



HOUSE DISTRICT 36

Note: Both candidates for HD 36, Benjamin Keyes (Dem) and Ty Linger (Rep) did not participate in this questionnaire.



HOUSE DISTRICT 37

Note: All candidates for HD 37, Jason Wilson (Ind), Tracey Miller Karcher (Dem) and Shane Klakken (Rep) did not participate in this questionnaire.



HOUSE DISTRICT 39

Kerri Seekins-Crowe (Rep)



Age: 60

Location: Billings

Education: BBA, MBA

Occupation: Realtor

Contact information:
Kerri4MT@gmail.com

1. I support regulations that require data centers to pay their own way, to not transfer the power bill on to the backs of local residents, and to not treat Montana like a server closet with a pretty mountain backdrop. Local say, no ratepayer subsidy, and if they want cheap electricity they can build the plant. Opportunity—yes. Being a drain on the taxpayers or environment—no.

2. Access to health care should be available for those who sincerely need it, earn it and continue to be eligible to keep. It is not a federal subscription that expires every election cycle. Work requirements, less red tape for doctors and pharmacies are necessary. We must also stop pretending Helena can print money when Washington takes it away. Access isn't the same thing as another entitlement with a nicer brochure.

3. Yes. A 4.7% flat rate is simpler, harder for the next legislature to jack up, and leaves more money with the Montanans who earned it. The budget impact is real—so we have the opportunity to make government more efficient. Montanans are not a piggy bank for bloated government. Montanans also deserve a legislature that tightens the budget and allows them to keep more of their hard-earned money

4. Bipartisanship is a tool, not a goal. Montanans sent us to Helena to solve problems not to perform unity. When we can work across the aisle on issues that clearly serve working families—property-tax relief, public safety, infrastructure, and protecting our outdoor way of life—I will do it. I already have. What I will not do is trade away core principles to paper over intra-party or inter-party fights. Last session showed what happens when a handful of Republicans decide the only way to “get things done” is to hand the Senate to Democrats. That left Montana with unfinished business. I will collaborate where the policy is sound and the Montana Constitution and Montana values are respected. I will not collaborate on issues that undermine parental rights, women's sports, the Second Amendment, or the right to life. Those are not bargaining chips.

5. Yes, we must revisit it carefully and

with data, not with another last-minute scramble. HB 231 and SB 542 had the opportunity to deliver real relief for most primary homeowners that was long overdue after two reappraisal cycles that hammered residential property. However, the bills were heavily amended in the final days, produced some unintended hits on multi-family housing, and left legitimate questions about constitutionality and implementation. I did not vote for the bills in final form because of their negative impact on Yellowstone County that was ignored by the rest of the state. Local-government spending growth keeps pushing mill rates up as well. I will support targeted, technical corrections that are necessary before we can declare the job finished. Relief for Montana families who live here year-round should always be a priority. But we also need to ensure that there is not an inflationary tax shift to utilities.

6. Montanans—especially seniors—are being targeted by schemes, fake investment platforms, and crypto-kiosk scams. Our State Auditor and Attorney General are already uncovering and prosecuting the criminals robbing Montanans.

When re-elected I will ensure that the Commissioner of Securities and Insurance and the Attorney General have tools and staffing they need for faster enforcement and restitution.

Require clearer disclosures and regulations for crypto ATMs/kiosks. Continue to support a coordinated public-education campaign (AARP, county attorneys, banks, and the Auditor's office) so people recognize the red flags before they wire money. Treat these scams as the organized crime they often are, not as “buyer beware” footnotes. Innovation is welcome. Predators who steal from Montana families are not.



Melissa Smith (Dem)



Age: 53

Location: Billings

Education: BA in 2-D Art

Occupation: website developer

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406-534-9879

1. Montanans only learned the terms of the Broadview power deal after eight months of redactions and a legal challenge. Transparency shouldn't require a lawsuit.

I've built my career in technology, which is why I'm careful about projects this size. We can only welcome them on

terms that protect our community and our environment. I'll advocate for a separate rate class so a data center's power costs stay with it, full grid cost accounting, Public Service Commission oversight, and contracts the public can read. Neighbors deserve a hearing before anything breaks ground, and counties deserve authority to say no.

2. When Washington shifts costs, the bill lands on Montana families and the hospitals that serve them. Montana already made one good decision here: in 2025 lawmakers from both parties lifted the sunset on Medicaid expansion, and about 77,000 Montanans keep coverage that keeps rural hospitals open. Funding still comes up every session, and I'll advocate for funding it fully. I'll also advocate for price transparency so a family can know a cost before care, state action on prescription drug prices, and protecting Medicaid for Workers with Disabilities so a raise never costs someone the coverage that lets them work.

3. A flat income tax is a hard no. Montana already taxes most families at the lower of its two rates, so setting one flat rate at that number changes nothing for us. A couple with \$400,000 in taxable income saves about \$1,900, while a family in the middle gains nothing. Meanwhile the state collects less, and that gap does not disappear. It shows up as crowded classrooms, nursing homes that cannot keep staff, and local property taxes picking up the difference. I'll advocate for a tax system that reflects what a family can afford.

4. Yellowstone County sends roughly two dozen legislators to Helena. I'd work to organize them into a county caucus, so our water, our power bills, and our property taxes come ahead of party position. Broadview already showed this works. Ranchers, Democrats, and Republicans asked the same questions, and nobody checked a party registration first. The neighbors I meet are not sorted by party, and neither are their power bills. A bill needs 51 votes in the House, and no caucus arrives with 51 votes that agree on everything. That is why counting past your own side is the job.

5. Yes, and it shouldn't depend on paperwork. Homeowners who received a rebate were enrolled automatically. Landlords had to apply, many did not, and the cost lands in their tenants' rent. A homeowner who misses the deadline can appeal. A landlord cannot, so the renter has no remedy at all. Overtaxed neighbors are voting down school funding and vital services their own families need. We must also close the tax tracker loophole. When a utility's property taxes change, that lands on customer bills automatically, with no Public Service Commission review. Property

tax relief should stay relief.

6. Scams follow the money, and right now they run through crypto kiosks. In 2025 Americans reported more than \$388 million lost at these machines, and most of it was taken from people over 50. Montana can act. I'd advocate for transaction limits, plain-language warnings at the machine, a short window to reverse a first-time transfer, and licensing so operators answer to a regulator. Lawmakers in both parties are already looking at this, and I'd sign on. I'd also fund the Department of Justice's consumer protection office. A law nobody enforces is an empty promise.



HOUSE DISTRICT 40

Note: Both candidates for HD 40, Gabriel Bradshaw (Dem) and Mike Vinton (Rep) did not participate in this questionnaire.



HOUSE DISTRICT 42

Note: Candidates for HD 42, Sidney Chip Fitzpatrick (Dem) did not participate in this questionnaire.



Jeremiah Jabs

Age: 27

Location: St. Xavier, MT

Education: Some college

Occupation: Farmer/
Rancher

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1. The development of interruptible-use permits on water for data centers where permit criteria such as metering and interruption conditions (and other community concerns) could be included. This would mean water for data centers being interrupted if stream or ground water levels dropped below a certain threshold for a certain amount of time.

2. Montana needs to strengthen negotiating tools for self-pay individuals. Where and when insurance or Medicaid fails individuals are left picking up the bill. Healthcare providers in Montana are some of the best when it comes to transparency in pricing and negotiating a self-pay bill. I would like to work with existing Montana providers to codify this as standard practice.

3. Only as long as Montana's budget would stay balanced.

4. Before we are members of our party we are Montanans. As Americans we hold Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness

to be foundational. In Montana I believe we extent this to include Fraternity. Montana is a place where we know our neighbors and help each other out. I would collaborate with anybody who holds the long term interest of Montanans at their forefront.

5. While out door knocking I have heard a lot about property taxes and know that Montanans are looking for further property tax relief. I believe this will be one of the top priorities of the 2027 session and I would support a solution where Montanans see property tax relief.

6. Supporting legislation requiring digital asset kiosk operators to register and to require these operators to comply with anti-money laundering and anti-fraud requirements.



HOUSE DISTRICT 43

Note: Candidate for HD 43, Larry Brewster (Rep) did not participate in this questionnaire.

Rudolf Haden (Dem)

Age: 51

Location: Billings

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

Occupation: Retired

Contact information: Haden4Montana.com, rmhaden4mt@gmail.com, 406-927-9496



1. I'm against large data centers in Wyoming, as I think the nation should have a policy that ensures resources are available for cooling and powering centers well into the next 25-30 years. In the event, we are not able to have a comprehensive federal plan that places these centers on the coasts where adequate water and powering capacity is available, then Montana MUST ensure at the very least all costs associated with maintenance (power and water) are covered by the companies who build them. Don't mistake my concern with data centers to represent my belief and intent to bring actual industries to Montana that provide great union jobs and resources to our state. Why should we bring industry here that take more than they provide? Simply put, I want industries that build our kids' futures while improving our lives well into the future.

2. My approach to public safety and programs, including healthcare, is to reduce administrative costs for state and federal revenue streams. The federal government's "forever war" in Iran is creating more healthcare crises. Changes to ACT and

Medicaid are indirectly related to this conflict, making it crucial for our state to review costs. Healthcare is a vital issue for everyone, regardless of health status. We have revenue to improve Medicare and address the impacts on ACT. Here's one policy I'd advocate and change. Let's change recreational marijuana taxation and review other "sin taxes." Taxing these products appropriately improves states' budgets. Some representatives will try to hide this, but people will continue to purchase these products, regardless of price.

3. I do not support a "flat tax." It's not helpful to current challenges in our budget and it's destructive for the future of our state. Let's understand this. Flat taxes help the rich, bankrupt the middle class and create revolution within the working class and poor. The issue is always going to be FAIRNESS IN TAXATION. Some think the public are very ill-informed on how revenue is managed in a state budget; maybe this is more true than I'd like to admit. However, folks know a raw deal when they see it, and when they look at who benefits from a flat tax they will find representatives like myself who will fight against the very rich and their continued attempts to siphon money from the masses while reducing any good that comes from the taxes paid by the working class of Montana.

4. Bipartisanship is not a "problem" in the sense that the respective political parties attempt to narrate. It is an absolute necessity for American politics and government. Intra-party "fighting" is politics. It's normal. It should always happen. Representatives are there to solve problems and manage the taxes their constituents provide to the state. When good ideas - and more importantly, good leaders - are up for debate in the House, we must listen. We must also find ways to improve those "good ideas." I know I'm not the smartest dude to be elected to representative office; that by the way, is exactly how everyone should feel going into a session of government. It will only be with that mindset that we improve upon the people we are there to represent. I intend to collaborate with any and all representatives whose ideas are ones I believe can contribute to the well-being and future improvement of Montana families. PERIOD.

5. Yes. Why not? It's not perfect by all means. We can improve property tax legislation as part of one of the biggest stream of revenue we have to manage in Montana. We still need to get after improving the tax position of our veterans and retired Montanans on a fixed budget.

6. The best approach to these types of "cancers" in a free society is education and transparency. When and where I have information on frauds and scams, I will

work to inform Montanans on what they are and how we can protect ourselves. We can leverage current state programs that inform on these types of issues.



HOUSE DISTRICT 44

Note: Both candidates for HD 44, Mike Eaton (Dem) and Katie Zolnikov (Rep) did not participate in this questionnaire.



HOUSE DISTRICT 45

Note: Candidate for HD 45, Bryce Walston (Rep) did not participate in this questionnaire.

Denise Baum (Dem)

Age: 58

Location: Billings

Education: BS in Criminal Justice Administration with an area of specialization in Psychology from Mount Senario College in Ladysmith, WI.

Occupation: Retired Billings

Police Department Detective/Current State Representative

Contact information: <https://baumformontana.com/>, baumformontana@gmail.com, 406-208-0345



1. I support establishing a clear regulatory framework prior to approving any new data centers. Responsible data-center development must protect Montana ratepayers, water resources & communities. Large New Load Tariffs would hold new customers responsible for the costs of building or expanding generation capacity or transmission lines so they are not passed on to existing residential, agricultural and small-business customers. Require long-term service commitments of 15-20 years for large projects. Transparency and accountability are paramount. Communities deserve public information about a project's energy use, water consumption, job commitments and long-term costs and benefits. Full exit & termination costs. The company should remain responsible for the unrecovered costs of infrastructure built specifically for its benefit. Lastly, ensure Montana gets a real economic benefit such as good union jobs, tax revenue, infrastructure investment, and economic diversification.

2. I support maintaining strong Medicaid outreach, along with enrollment assistance and timely eligibility reviews so that eligible Montanans do not lose coverage because of paperwork or administrative

barriers. Require DPHHS to proactively identify exemptions using information the state already possesses, minimize unnecessary paperwork, provide assistance with documentation, and give people adequate notice and appeal opportunities before coverage is terminated. Strengthen Montana's existing reinsurance program to reduce premiums statewide and make the process for claiming "medically frail" and caregiver exemptions simple, proactive and accessible. No eligible Montanan should lose health coverage because they cannot navigate a complicated administrative process.

3. No, I do not support a flat income tax. The Montana Legislative Fiscal Division's 2029 Biennium Outlook estimates that moving to a 4.7% flat tax would reduce individual income-tax collections by approximately \$130 million per year. Individual income tax is Montana's largest source of General Fund revenue. What's important to note is that this \$130 million reduction in individual income tax collections is recurring revenue. Montana has substantial ongoing financial responsibilities—K-12 education, Medicaid, behavioral health, public safety, infrastructure, higher education, corrections and local-government support. A permanent tax reduction creates an ongoing reduction

in the revenue available to fund these ongoing programs. Instead of yet another tax break for the state's wealthiest income earners, I would favor targeted tax relief where it provides the greatest benefit to working and middle-income Montanans while protecting the state's ability to fund essential services.

4. Bipartisanship is essential to a functioning Montana Legislature. To me, bipartisanship means being willing to work with anyone, regardless of party, to find common ground and solutions that benefit Montanans. It does not mean abandoning one's principles or avoiding difficult conversations; it means listening to one another, finding areas of agreement, and putting results ahead of partisan politics. This survey pointed out several challenges that the Montana legislature will face in the 2027 session, and these issues should not be viewed through a partisan lens. Issues that I would look for opportunities to collaborate on include lowering the cost of living, strengthening rural healthcare, supporting public education and workforce development, improving and investing in transportation infrastructure, protecting Montana's water and working lands, and expanding economic opportunities in communities across our state.

5. Even though the property tax package



(HB 231 and SB 542) that passed in the 2025 session provided property tax relief for 80% of Montanans on a principal residence, there are some changes needed to the Second Home Tax. HB 231 provided a one-time rebate of up to \$400 on 2024 property taxes for qualifying principal residences. SB 542 contained most of the major structural changes but together, the two bills were intended to provide property-tax relief to many primary residences while shifting more of the burden toward higher-value property and property that is not someone's primary home, including

short-term rentals. In discussions with colleagues on the Revenue Interim Committee, they are looking at various ways to specifically address the Second Home Tax which increased from 1.35% to 1.9%. One possibility may be to create a tiered system for Second Homes, similar to the 3-tier structure for a primary residence.

6. Having a law enforcement background, I strongly believe that prevention starts with education. I would support statewide public-awareness campaigns using public service announcements, social media, presentations at senior centers, schools, libraries, and community organizations to help Montanans recognize common scams, including cryptocurrency investment scams, romance scams, identity theft, and AI-enabled impersonation. Scams are prevalent and can be perpetrated through a variety of communication channels, including email, text message, social media and phone calls. I would also support stronger coordination among state agencies, law enforcement, financial institutions, and consumer-protection organizations so scams can be reported quickly and victims can receive assistance. Montana should ensure that people have clear, accessible information about where to report suspected fraud and how to protect themselves before sending money or personal information.

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HOUSE DISTRICT 46

Denise Joy (Dem)



Age: 61

Location: Billings

Education: BA Political Science, 2 years Master's Public Policy and Administration

Occupation: Special Needs Assistant

Contact information:

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Denisejoyforbillings@gmail.com 406-647-0337, P.O. Box 31192 Billings, MT 59107

1. To protect residential rate payers from the costs of development and operations of data centers, I support having any tax incentives given to data centers not be more generous than other Montana businesses. Improving regulatory processes with the Public Services Commission, or possible reorganization of the PSC regulatory body. Including the need to increase capacity at the PSC for more effective regulation. Environmental studies of the impact of data center water use, or other environmental impacts. To not allow the data center's electrical use cause to brown outs for other electrical users.

2. To address the rising costs of insurance, the lost subsidies has to be reinstated. The subsidies are significant in addressing costs. There are substantial differences in access and costs of healthcare in rural Montana. Some bills in the 2025 session highlighted the difficulty of continuing the operation of hospitals and clinics in rural Montana. Even if the costs are insurance is addressed, without adequate reimbursement for Medicaid and Medicare for hospitals and clinics, access to healthcare will still be too restricted. Technological advances in medicine are a huge benefit to healthcare, but access to routine medicine keeps down the costs of more advanced medical issues. Additionally, the healthcare for Indians off of reservations should be address. If you imagine a family traveling 100s of miles to access a dentist, access is still not adequately addressed.

3. No, I do not support a flat income tax. The budget impact is significant and very difficult to address. To find fiscal cuts to the amount of \$120 million would have devastating impacts on our social safety net. These cuts would exacerbates income equality, longevity, youth opportunity for economic success, and an ongoing mental health crisis from the stress from loss of benefits for basic survival.

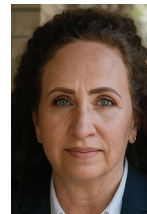
4. Collaboration is a necessity regardless of the turmoil with political parties. The voters of House District 46 expect me to get the job done for them. Circular arguments and not cooperating for policy solutions is not in anyone's interest. In 2025, I voted for many bills that were the outcome of interim committee work. The work of the committees is bipartisan. These bills were carried by Republican officials, but Democrats in the committees contributed equally on their process to the House. I voted for Property Tax Reform which had bipartisan votes. Bipartisan bills to address our progressive tax system is an area I would support. Addressing the unfairness of the lower income earners paying a larger share by percent of the income tax burden is an issue I would support.

5. No. I think the balance of differing classes of property tax is sufficiently addressed. Some people have questioned whether a property passed down through a family should be taxed as a second home. The value of those properties based on location and modern amenities can have high market value. Progressive property taxes access higher taxes based on high market values regardless of a property being inherited cabins.

6. Increase personnel for the Department of Justice's Consumer Protection division for greater investigative action and enforcement of cybercrimes and cryptocurrency scams. Protecting victims of scams and holding criminals accountable is a deterrent effect on further criminality.



Kim Welzenbach (Rep)



Age: 63

Location: Billings

Education: Business

Occupation: Chief Executive Officer

Contact information:

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kimformontana.org

1. Data centers should be required to provide the infrastructure needed to support their power and water demands independently of community resources, ensuring that local residents and businesses are not impacted by reduced utility availability or capacity. No tax incentives should be granted and consumer utility costs should not be affected.

2. Recent federal changes to Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act were intended to reduce fraud and improve program integrity. While insurance companies often report average net earnings of around 4.5%, a closer examination of industry finances raises questions about the true level of profitability within the healthcare system. To help lower healthcare costs and expand access to coverage, Montana should be opened to greater national competition. A more competitive marketplace can provide consumers with additional choices and help drive down costs. Insurance and pharmaceutical companies should also be required to provide greater transparency

about how premium dollars are spent so consumers can better understand where their money is going. In addition, Association Health Plans should be restored and expanded to allow individuals and small businesses to band together to negotiate better rates and access more affordable coverage options.

3. I support a flat income tax. Previous tax reductions have demonstrated that state revenue increased rather than decreased as a result.

4. Legislators are elected to represent the people who put them in office. Unfortunately, many elected officials appear to prioritize special interests and political affiliations over the needs and concerns of their constituents. I am committed to working with anyone who is willing to stand up for the interests of Montana residents first.

5. Yes. The Legislature needs to revisit the property tax package passed during the last session. The final legislation differed significantly from the proposal that was originally introduced. As a result, families who inherit a home after the death of a loved one can face substantial tax liabilities on that second property, which in many cases forces them to sell. Developers may also face significantly higher property tax burdens for owning multiple parcels of land, increasing development costs and ultimately driving up housing prices. One of the primary goals of the original legislation was to address the impact of out-of-state buyers on Montana's housing market. However,



available data indicates that approximately 71% of second homes in Montana are owned by year-round Montana residents rather than out-of-state purchasers. Given these unintended consequences, the Legislature should reexamine the law and consider revisions that better achieve its intended purpose.

6. I believe the most effective way to protect Montanans from fraud and scams is through public education, stronger legal protections, prompt reporting to law enforcement, and meaningful accountability for offenders. Because cryptocurrency transactions often cross state and national boundaries, many related scams fall under federal jurisdiction. Montana's best approach is to encourage rapid reporting of suspected fraud and to work closely with federal law enforcement agencies to investigate and prosecute these crimes.



HOUSE DISTRICT 47

John Maxwell (Rep)

Age: 32

Location: Billings

Education: High School w/ Partial College

Occupation: Project Consultant - Construction

Contact information: maxwellforhouse.com, maxwellformontana@gmail.com



com

1. I'm open to tax breaks, but I want to know what our community gets in return. Will people who live here have a real shot at the permanent jobs? Will local contractors and small businesses get work? Will the tax revenue outweigh what we give up? Those are fair questions before we offer a large developer a deal that the businesses already supporting our community don't get. I'd require those commitments in writing, with repayment if they aren't met. Developers should pay for the infrastructure they need, and we need enforceable protections for our water, utility bills and nearby property owners. I want the investment, but our neighbors and small businesses need to come out ahead, too.

2. I think this question mixes together the cost of insurance and the cost of care. Both matter to us as Montanans, but a larger subsidy alone won't fix an unaffordable medical bill. I'd protect Medicaid for people who qualify, check eligibility and simplify renewals so paperwork doesn't cost someone their coverage. I'd support Montana's

reinsurance program to help hold down premiums, with insurers required to show that savings reach customers. I'd put rural health funding toward local clinics, training healthcare workers and connecting patients with specialists through telehealth. I'd also push for clear prices before scheduled care and limits on insurance approval delays. I want people here to be able to see a doctor and afford the treatment, whether they're on Medicaid, buying their own insurance or covered through work. That's the result I'd judge these policies by.

3. I'm open to a flat tax, but I won't support this plan on promises alone. Under the tax rules already scheduled for 2027, a married couple with up to \$130,000 in ordinary taxable income already pays **4.7%**. This proposal alone gives them no further rate reduction. Even the study promoting it projects that economic growth would replace only part of the lost revenue. I want working families to keep more of what they earn, not wait for someone else's tax cut to reach them. Before voting yes, I'd want stronger evidence that this genuinely helps my constituents and my family, rather than shifting costs onto our property taxes, fees or essential services. I'd compare this plan with relief that reaches working households directly and insist on identifying real spending savings, not just promising to find them later. The middle class shouldn't keep being government's fallback plan.

4. What matters when we leave Helena is whether Montana families are better off, not whether our party came out ahead. I'll work with Democrats or Republicans to protect families from domestic violence, bring down childcare costs and help our children build a future here. As a parent, I don't see those as someone else's issues. A family that needs help shouldn't have to wait for the right party to offer it. I won't agree with every proposal, and I'll ask hard questions about what it costs and whether it will actually help. But if we can get something worthwhile done together, we should. People sent us to do that work, not to put their lives on hold while we fight among ourselves.

5. Yes, but I'd build on it rather than start over. I support the lower rates for primary homes and long-term rentals. My focus would be on whether the package creates problems elsewhere, particularly for small businesses, farms and rental housing. I'd want actual tax bills reviewed before changing rates again, not just projections of who should benefit. I'd also make it easier to correct an exemption mistake without paying an inflated bill first. And when local taxes rise, residents deserve a plain explanation of how much

comes from spending decisions and how much comes from the state's changes. We can improve this package without taking away the relief people received.

6. This is personal to me as my father was a victim to this type of crime, a friend of mine lost substantial amounts from a crypto scam from an ATM in his business, and another was hit with a blackmail scam that included all of his family members in a group text. These attacks are getting more sophisticated and our reactive vs proactive actions are falling behind. It is imperative that we find more substantial ways to prevent these attacks, that are more than warnings on our state website. I believe in investing in a system to give people immediate access to trained help when they're being threatened or pressured to send money. That help needs to connect directly with banks, crypto ATM operators and law enforcement to try to stop the theft while there's still time. It must be a universally known helpline with immediate resources to help the victim in real time, much like how 911 works during an emergency.



James Reavis (Dem)

Age: 42

Location: Billings

Education: Juris Doctor, Master's in Public Administration, Bachelor's in History

Occupation: Lawyer

Contact information: www.reavisformontana.com



1. Hyperscale data centers such as the proposed Quantica facility must be banned in Montana. Other large-scale data centers must be strictly regulated and taxed appropriately. A moratorium on data centers should be passed to provide enough time for the Legislature to pass needed regulations to protect our energy supplies and the environment.

2. I support adopting a millionaire's tax so that the wealthy pay their fair share. Revenue from such a tax can be used to fund our education system and to help lower healthcare costs.

3. I will not support a flat income tax. Full stop.

4. I worked with Republicans last year to pass anti-SLAPP legislation and to restrict the shackling of pregnant inmates at detention centers. I am always willing to work with Republicans when we can agree on good ideas, such as permanently adopting the Medicaid expansion. That being said, there are strong, valid disagreements between the Democratic

and Republican parties. If Democrats stick together, we have a 42-vote sledgehammer that we can use as leverage to support better laws in the Treasure State.

5. I voted for the property tax reforms last session, despite flaws in this bill. A major flaw that must be revisited is to establish a more automatic process to register Montanans for the homestead rate because many lower-income properties are seeing massive price hikes due to paperwork problems. That's the kind of government bureaucracy nonsense that I will work to stop.

6. I support a complete ban on Kalshi and Polymarket. I would also vote for legislation banning Bitcoin ATMs, which server no purpose except to transfer money to fraudsters.



HOUSE DISTRICT 48

Tucker Colvin (Dem)

Age: 34

Location: Billings

Education: B.S.

Environmental Science - Montana State University, M.S. Geography and Environmental Studies - University of New Mexico

Occupation: Drinking water



& wastewater operator working with rural and tribal utilities
Contact information: TuckerForMontana.org, tuckerformontana@gmail.com, 406-534-9408

1. I have significant concerns about large data centers and do not believe they are in the best interest to our community. These concerns include water use, pollution, power demand, loud noise, the footprint of such a large facility, the impact to the local community, the potential for an abandoned facility, and more. I also have concerns around AI. I would support regulations on limiting the ability to construct data centers above a specified size and regulations that require any data center development to have strict requirements on things like energy usage, requiring local labor, bonding to prevent the public from being left with abandoned facilities, and have a fair tax rate. While I generally do not support the development of large-scale data centers, I would also be open to a two-year moratorium on data center development to provide time in order to ensure effective and thoughtful legislation can be implemented.

2. Although these changes have been largely at the federal level, there are things

that Montana can do to support accessible and affordable healthcare for all Montanans. One of the recent changes to Medicaid is to add a work requirement. A huge impact of this is to kick people off Medicaid simply because of increased bureaucracy and paperwork requirements. Montana should do as much as it can to administer the program in a way that will minimize people needlessly losing their insurance. I also support using state funds as best as possible to keep people affordably insured. Neglecting care and people not being able to afford their care make the overall cost of healthcare more expensive for everyone. By doing what we can to ensure people have adequate coverage, access to medical providers, and utilize preventative medicine, we can have better health outcomes and at a lower overall cost.

3. No, I do not support a flat income tax. A “flat tax” is a tax cut for the wealthy, with the biggest beneficiaries being the top 1% of earners. Most Montanans would not save a cent from this tax cut. Currently, the overall tax structure in Montana is regressive, meaning that lower-income individuals pay the highest percent tax rate at almost 10%, while the median Montanan pays 8.5%, the top 5 percent pay 7.5% and the top 1 percent pay 6.7%. By lowering the income tax rate for the wealthiest Montanans, this disparity will further increase. The wealthy need to pay their fair share. This tax cut for the wealthy will come with an estimated \$140 million hit to the state budget. This comes at a time when Montana’s public schools are already underfunded by hundreds of millions of dollars and program costs, such as for healthcare and other benefit programs are falling more on states budgets.

4. At the state level, there is lots of legislation that does not fit squarely into a partisan box. It is important to have a good relationship with legislators of both parties in order to get legislation passed for the benefit of Montanans. Regardless of party affiliation, everybody essentially wants a lot of the same things: an income that meets their needs, a safe community, quality education, and a government that works for the people. I would be open to collaboration with any legislator as long as the proposed legislation will benefit the people of Montana.

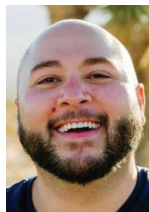
5. I think there are still things that need to be addressed regarding property taxes. In Montana, property taxes largely go to local governments, such as counties, cities, and school districts. The amount of property taxes paid varies greatly by county. Many of the multimillion-dollar homes recently constructed in Montana are in counties that do not have high income tax compared to more urban locations. This means that these wealthy individuals are able to pay a lower percentage property tax than people

in Billings. This tax structure also makes for winners and losers for counties and local governments. I believe that property taxes should be more broadly distributed throughout the state. When it comes to school districts, every child in Montana deserves a quality education regardless of their location. Instead of relying as much on local mil levies, that may or may not pass, property taxes should better cover the cost of education across Montana.

6. Fraud and scams are a huge concern for Montanans of all ages and especially seniors, and there are a few things the state can do to help protect Montanans. One would be to ban cryptocurrency ATMs. An outsized use of these ATMs is for fraudulent and scamming activities. Other states have already passed bans. The state could also strengthen laws that offer better consumer protection and be more strict on fraudulent and illegal financial activity.



Curtis Schomer (Rep)



Age: 42
Location: Billings
Education: High school
Occupation: Safety in emergency management at Billings clinic
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1. Under the rules on the books today, I could not support data centers coming to Montana. Earlier legislatures gave them a special tax break, and as it stands, it is a giveaway. Under the right rules, though, it is worth discussing. Data centers should pay a fair property tax that helps reduce residential taxes in the host county and surrounding impacted counties. They should use closed-loop, low-water cooling, pay for any new power generation or transmission they require, cover their own roads, limit noise and light pollution, and post a bond so communities are not left with an abandoned facility. Montanans’ concerns are real. Meet those standards, and a data center can bring significant tax revenue while using few local services. Without them, it is a bad deal, and I will not support it.

2. I will always support policies that keep health care affordable and accessible for Montanans. I voted to continue Medicaid expansion, and I will keep supporting it. Montana built the program to ensure coverage goes to people who are eligible and truly need it, while also helping people stay healthy, gain skills, and succeed in the workforce. We should protect Medicaid from

waste, fraud and abuse without creating red tape that knocks eligible working people off coverage. As federal work requirements take effect, no one should lose care because of a lost form or broken portal. We also need to restore adequate Medicaid provider rates, keep rural hospitals and nursing homes open, and grow our health care workforce through dual credit, apprenticeships, and training for nurses, CNAs, techs and EMTs. Coverage only matters if there is someone there to provide the care.

3. Montana has cut its top income tax rate from 6.9% to 5.4%, while state revenue has remained strong. I believe government should keep taxes as low as possible while still funding the services people count on. If our schools, health care system, public safety, and services for seniors and vulnerable Montanans are responsibly funded, I would look at lowering the rate again. But I would tie any move from 5.4% to a 4.7% flat tax to revenue triggers, so each reduction happens only when growth can support it. The Legislative Fiscal Division estimates the full change would cost about \$140 million over the next two-year budget, so it should be phased in. I am always looking for ways to cut taxes, but we also have a responsibility to protect core services and take care of Montanans who truly need help.

4. Most of what the Legislature does is not partisan. Roads, bridges, water systems, schools, public safety, and getting a young person into a trade do not carry a party label. I am a Republican and will be a good team player with my Republican colleagues. But I will always put the needs of my constituents and my area ahead of outside interests and political pressure. That means keeping power bills down, keeping property taxes in check, making sure data centers follow the rules, training people for the trades, keeping our hospitals open, and protecting seniors from fraud. On those issues, I will work with anyone from either party who wants to get it done. Last session, property tax relief for primary homes and Medicaid expansion required Republicans and Democrats to work together. You do not have to agree with someone on everything to get something done with them.

5. The 2025 property tax package helped well over 300,000 Montana homeowners, and that matters. Between 2021 and 2023, home values jumped about 66%, and too much of the tax burden had shifted onto family homes. But that does not mean HB 231 and SB 542 are perfect or should be left untouched. I believe the Legislature should review how the package is working in the real world and fix what is not working. My focus is not defending a particular bill. It is protecting primary homeowners, long-term renters, and small businesses from being hit with another shift in the tax burden. I also want to

make sure people who missed the homestead sign-up are treated fairly. Every tax break is paid for by someone. I am open to improving the package, but the goal has to remain a fairer, more sustainable property tax system for Montana families.

6. As co-chair of Montana’s Blockchain and Digital Innovation Task Force, I have spent a lot of time looking at cryptocurrency fraud, and I believe we need to act. Crypto ATMs have become a tool scammers use to steal from Montanans, especially seniors. I would support banning them if we cannot put strong enough protections in place. At a minimum, they should be heavily regulated with operator licensing, machine registration, transaction and fee limits, clear scam warnings, live customer assistance, and protections that allow victims who report fraud quickly to recover their money. We also need strong investigators in the State Auditor’s Office and Attorney General’s consumer protection division and better public education. Technology and innovation can benefit Montana, but innovation cannot become an excuse to let scammers prey on people. Protecting Montanans has to come first.



HOUSE DISTRICT 49

Note: Candidate for HD 49, Charlie Loveridge (Rep) did not participate in this questionnaire.

Rebecca Noell (Dem)



Age: 43
Location: Billings
Education: Bachelor’s Degree in Cell and Molecular Biology
Occupation: Costco Wholesale Stocker
Contact information: noell4mt.com, noell4hd49@gmail.com, [instagram @noell4hd49](https://www.instagram.com/noell4hd49)

1. I’m in favor of enacting a two-year data center moratorium in Montana. We need that time to create strong regulations that will protect Montana communities and make sure that large scale industrial development is done with union labor. It is our job to ensure residential Montanans are not saddled with the costs of utility infrastructure upgrades. Rapid data center development void of strong regulation will irreparably harm Montana communities.

2. Medicaid expansion in Montana must be maintained and the web portal with DPHHS must be fixed so that Montanans who qualify for health care coverage can stay in the system. The federal government’s spending cuts to Medicaid are one of the major issues

creating a challenge for Montana's budget this session.

3. I do not support a flat income tax rate in Montana. I believe our wealthiest neighbors, like Governor Greg Gianforte, should pay a higher rate than the average working Montanan. I believe a flat tax rate among all income levels is unfair, regressive, and harmful to our state budget. We should not be handing a tax cut to only our wealthiest neighbors. I am in support of keeping hard earned dollars in the pockets of working class Montanans.

4. Bipartisanship is absolutely essential to accomplishing the work of the legislature. Working with folks of all persuasions to make my community better is what I do everyday through my paid and volunteer work. I'm eager to work across the aisle with Republicans in the House on many critical issues in Montana. Some of the most pressing concerns I've heard from constituents include healthcare affordability and access, regulating the data center industry, and revisiting property tax reform. All of these policies would require broad bipartisan support and cooperation.

5. Constituents in House District 49 have property tax reform on their minds. I've heard about this issue so much while canvassing that I believe it should be revisited by the Legislature again this session.

6. I would rely on finance and banking experts to educate me on issues surrounding cryptocurrencies. The unfortunate reality about scams is that these illegal activities can negatively impact people and families. One of the avenues the state could take would be to fund a program to educate vulnerable populations about scams. This is an issue that I have not heard brought up by anyone in HD 49 while knocking doors, so while it is an important concern it is not top of mind for the average Montanan in the district I hope to represent in Helena.



HOUSE DISTRICT 50

Note: Candidate for HD 50, Stewart Harris (Rep) did not participate in this questionnaire.



Mark Peters (Dem)
Location: Billings
Education: Bachelor's from UNI,
Occupation: Facility Manager
Contact information: MPETERSHD50.com, MPETERSHD50@gmail.com, MPETERSHD50

- 1. It would help to put a moratorium on the Broadview Data center until we are able to address the issues. Oversight should include emissions, air quality, energy, noise and complete transparency of the companies plans and operations.
- 2. We should fund the shortages by taxing large corporations operating in the state. We should, in addition, negotiate lower prices with hospitals and providers on procedures and cost of prescription drugs. We should also work with the Federal government to turn the ACA into a single payor program to lower costs.
- 3. No, I would not support a flat tax. Gianforte is pressing for another tax break for the very rich. With the Federal government already cutting funding to the state, we need to tax income appropriately to fund the government budget here at home. This flat tax, if passed, would decrease revenue by the millions.
- 4. The last time Democrats had a majority in the house was 1991. What intra-party fighting are you referring to.
- 5. There is not a significant tax break for residential primary residences in this package. Yes, property taxes should be reviewed again in the next session.
- 6. This issue should be an agreeable bipartisan effort. Types of fraud and scams being targeted at the most vulnerable

people should be addressed in this session. Some local banks are interested in cryptocurrency. They may be a source to speak with about crypto scams and how to avoid them. More information can lead to better legislation.



HOUSE DISTRICT 51



Jodee Etchart (Rep)
Location: Billings
Education: BS MSU Billings, BA Rocky Mountain College
Occupation: Physician Assistant
Contact information: JodeeforMT@gmail.com, JodeeforMT.com, 406-318-9773

- 1. Data centers require a careful case-by-case approach. We should balance economic opportunity and tax revenue with enforceable protections for water, power reliability, job creation, and on-site generation that doesn't shift any costs to ratepayers. Any project must include guaranteed local input and approval.
- 2. Improving access to high-quality

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healthcare has been a significant focus of my legislative work. As Chair of Human Services, I've worked to expand access by supporting rural emergency hospitals, ensuring licensed professionals practice to the full extent of their education and training, and streamlining licensing. H.R. 1 includes an 80-hour per month community engagement requirement for certain Medicaid recipients, with exemptions and qualifying activities including work, school, caring for family, and volunteer service. We are working with DPHHS to make six-month redeterminations straightforward and ensure no one falls through the cracks. HR 1 also created the Rural Health Transformation Program. I serve on its Center of Excellence Advisory Council, helping advise efforts to protect and expand healthcare access. Montana received \$233 million in first-year funding and could receive up to \$1.2 billion over five years. Healthy people equal healthy communities.

3. Before considering another major change to Montana's tax policy, my priority is getting property tax reform right. Montanans need meaningful, sustainable property tax relief. Montana is also one of only eight states that still taxes Social Security benefits for some residents. That deserves serious consideration as we look at future tax relief. Any proposal for a flat income tax should be carefully evaluated based on its effect on taxpayers, economic growth, and existing obligations. Bottom line: make better use of taxpayer dollars.

4. Healthcare access, behavioral health, protecting vulnerable Montanans, childcare, and ensuring that administrative rules reflect legislative intent are areas where collaboration has produced better results. As Chair of the Human Services Committee, I have worked collaboratively with both parties to address these issues. I co-chair the governor's licensing task force healthcare subcommittee, where bipartisan work delivered practical improvements to remove unnecessary barriers.

5. Property tax remains a priority, and the Legislature has an obligation to evaluate actual results of the changes enacted. When implementation shows unintended consequences or inequities, we should address them. Taxing unrealized gains—homeowners facing higher bills on value they haven't actually realized—remains a problem. Bottom line: make better use of taxpayer dollars.

6. Financial scams aren't victimless crimes, and the harm doesn't end when the money's gone. We need strong enforcement against those who commit fraud, and we also need prevention through public education and voluntary partnerships with retailers, banks, and community groups to spot and stop fraud early.



Precious McKenzie (Dem)



Age: 51
Location: Billings
Education: PhD in Literature
Occupation: Administrator in Higher Education
Contact information: mckenzieformontana.com

- 1.** Does not support large scale data centers
- 2.** I would work to protect and expand Medicaid coverage in Montana. The federal government has imposed new work and reporting requirements on Medicaid expansion, including an 80-hour-per-month community engagement requirement for many adults. I do not support that policy change. However, Montana should do everything legally possible to make sure eligible people do not lose coverage because of paperwork, reporting problems, or bureaucratic barriers. The state should provide enrollment assistance, automatic data verification, clear notifications, and easy appeals. State funding could support rural hospitals, critical-access hospitals, behavioral-health providers, and obstetric services—particularly where losing one provider could leave an entire region without care.

3. No. I do not support a flat income tax. The governor's proposal helps only the extremely wealthy and his flat income tax proposal would reduce the state's revenue, which in turn would hurt our general fund, negatively impacting our state's services and jobs.

4. There are several areas where I would welcome collaboration with colleagues from both parties. I would look for common ground on issues such as supporting Montana's small businesses, expanding access to affordable housing and health care, and making sure our public schools have the resources they need.

5. The Legislature should revisit the property tax package. While providing relief to homeowners is important, the package should do more to protect renters, working families, and people on fixed incomes while ensuring that schools and local governments have the resources they need. Lawmakers should also look at the long-term effects on local services and avoid creating a situation where tax cuts lead to cuts in education, public safety, or other essential services.

6. I would support stronger oversight of cryptocurrency platforms and require clear disclosures so people understand the risks before investing. I would invest in education—especially for seniors and



other vulnerable communities—to help Montanans recognize scams, protect their personal information, and avoid fraudulent schemes.



HOUSE DISTRICT 52

Note: Candidate for HD 52, Stacy Zinn (Rep) did not participate in this questionnaire.

Elizabeth Heald (Dem)



Age: 46
Location: Billings
Education: Bachelors Degree
Occupation: Caregiver
Contact information: Hd52ejh@gmail.com, 406-850-5283, Heald House District 52 (fb), Yellowstone Valley Democrats website

1. It seems as though data centers are here to stay. If we must have them they need to be under 20 mega watts. I also believe all costs need to be paid by the developer, no discounts or special privileges. Only local hires. If they need to bring people in to train the local hires, so be it. There need to be protections in place to safeguard our environment as well. Developers need to leave the area better than they found it. And most importantly, if the people say no massive data centers, then our representatives need to say no too.

2. Montana could establish a state-funded pool specifically designed to prevent people from becoming uninsured when federal assistance changes. For example, the state could provide sliding-scale assistance to people who qualify. There are also a lot of people losing Medicaid due to paperwork. To fix that, Montana could invest in automatic renewal, text/email reminders, simplified renewal forms, community enrollment navigators, automatic referrals to Marketplace coverage, when someone loses Medicaid, and a temporary coverage period while an eligibility dispute is resolved.

3. With our influx of "wealthy out-of-staters", of course a fellow out-of-stater (Greg Gianforte), would want to have a flat income tax! Does it need to be any easier or more beneficial for wealthy people to move here? There are Montanans in Gallatin County living in their cars because they can no longer afford housing. Why should they pay the same income tax as the millionaires moving in? Taxes need to reflect state summarized earnings, everyone paying their share, not less or more than.

4. I believe, in our state, we are all Montanans first. When helping push someone out of a snowbank, I've never asked them what party they align with. If I ask my neighbor for help he doesn't offer to help only if my politics are the same as his. As a politician in our state, I believe we must work across the aisle. We all want the best schools for our kids, the safest communities, where regular people can afford to live! If I'm elected I fully intend

to support all of the voters in my district, not just the democrats. Why wouldn't I try to work with my fellow house members for the best possible outcome for everyone involved?

5. I love getting a refund! Who doesn't? However, in 2026, Montana introduced a new homestead and rental property reduced property tax rate for qualifying properties. They also mailed refund checks to a bunch of homeowners. Those refund checks are nice, but there are so many things we could have put that money towards. What if, as a state, we voted on ways to spend that revenue. School improvements, animal shelter upgrades, free school lunch... the possibilities are endless.

6. Having fallen victim to a scam the day before my birthday this year, I feel very passionate about this issue. I believe there should be stronger restrictions on 406 numbers - like you must be in Montana. I also have a hard time believing we can't track these guys down. They need to be pursued and prosecuted to the full extent of the law. The men who called me pretended to be from our sheriff's department. What they had to say sounded so legitimate, I believed them.



HOUSE DISTRICT 53

Note: Both candidates for HD 53, Troy Charbonneau (Rep) and Matthew J Hankins (Dem) did not participate in this questionnaire.



HOUSE DISTRICT 54

Note: Candidate for HD 54, Lee Deming (Rep) did not participate in this questionnaire.

Janine Coole (Dem)



Age: 64
Location: Laurel
Education: Associates degree
Occupation: Assistant Yardmaster
Contact information: Janine4laurel.com

1. There should be environmental restrictions to protect adjacent property owners. There are currently no restrictions for noise & vibration in unzoned areas in Yellowstone County, like Broadview. EPA controls air pollution, DWP controls water restrictions. They should not be able to drill into the lower aquifer to access water. I was out collecting Broadview Data Center

Petition this summer.

2. I am hoping we can bring some sense back to Washington in 2027 after the midterms. Big Beautiful Bill was a boon to the wealthy and an atrocity for the rest of us. We need Medicare and "Affordable" care fully funded. They voted down Medicaid expansion in state legislature last session. I would have voted for Medicaid expansion. It is hard to tell what effect a state legislature can do to remediate the damage done by federal cuts. Additionally, we need to remove the cap in social security contributions and keep social security funded. (I will get railroad retirement not social security).

3. It simply kills the 5.65% tax rate over a certain income level. It only cuts taxes for the wealthy and will make a large reduction for the state budget going forward. It is a really bad for Montana.

4. I will always strive to do the right thing for normal everyday Montanans, no matter young, old, disabled, and/or veteran. If we can come to a compromise that makes logical sense, I will work across the aisle to formulate a positive outcome.

5. There is a next-to-nothing property's tax rate on data centers for one. One of my main focuses is on affordability and property tax is a big part of that. It all needs to be revisited.

6. I think that the CFPB should be handling that but due to DOGE cuts, it is not be that effective anymore. I am not sure what programs we currently have in place for this. It should be expanded to cover new threats like crypto.



HOUSE DISTRICT 55

Note: Candidate for HD 55, Richard Gessling (Dem) did not participate in this questionnaire.

Brad Barker (Rep)



Age: 54
Location: Luther
Education: B.S. in Mathematical Economics, United States Military Academy at West Point; Master of Public Policy, Georgetown University; Master of Military Studies, Marine Corps University

Occupation: Small business owner and retired Army officer
Contact information: bradbarker.com, brad@bradbarker.com, 406-426-1034, facebook.com/Representative.Barker

1. I do not support a moratorium. Helena should set the minimum standards for data

centers and let local governments decide the rest. Ratepayers first. The customer that causes the cost pays it, not a family in Bridger or a ranch outside Joliet. Water. Require low-water cooling designs and verify water use with meters. Grid. Make backup generation and demand flexibility a condition of connection, so large loads strengthen the system, not strain it. Good neighbors. Setbacks from homes, noise limits at the property line, and dark sky lighting: shielded, full cutoff fixtures. Transparency. Water rights, power agreements, tax classification and local incentives should be public before decisions are made. I sponsored HB 890, now law, requiring certain public boards to record meetings.

Qualified data centers are classed at 0.9 percent against a 3 percent top rate on other business equipment, and the data behind it is scarce and self-reported. We should revisit the rate.

2. Rural access and affordable coverage both matter in Carbon County. Families need a clinic, a nursing home and an ambulance they can reach, and a premium they can actually pay. In 2023 I voted for legislation to raise Medicaid provider rates to the Guidehouse study benchmarks, and for HB 872, which established the Behavioral Health System for Future Generations fund. Competitive reimbursement helps rural providers recruit and retain staff. But families and taxpayers cannot sustain endlessly rising costs, and federal borrowing is no substitute for reform. We need to cut administrative overhead, simplify billing and reduce fraud and unnecessary middleman costs. I support exploring transparent cash-pay options for routine care, paired with insurance that protects against major medical expenses, while ensuring people with low incomes or chronic conditions can afford the care they need. I would also strengthen the reinsurance program that holds down marketplace premiums.

3. I am open to it, but the structure matters more than the label. Montana has already delivered real relief. The Legislative Fiscal Division estimates the income tax cuts passed from 2017 through 2025 could reduce collections by roughly \$628 million a year as of FY 2028, and even so, individual income tax revenues are projected 85.8 percent higher in FY 2028 than in FY 2017. The estimated tax-cut effects are static; they exclude behavioral responses to the changes. My approach is straightforward. Step the rate down while maintaining a balanced budget and monitor collections before triggering the next reduction. I have modeled a trigger structure that does exactly that. Keep the Earned Income Tax Credit so relief reaches working families at the lower end. Montana has delivered meaningful relief

while keeping a balanced budget. I would support a flat tax that keeps both of those true.

4. My obligation is to my constituents and the Constitution, not to a caucus. School funding formulas, property tax classification, water adjudication, corrections costs and utility rates get worked out by reading the fiscal analysis and listening to the people who live with it. We will still disagree on priorities, and that is fair. I sponsored HB 352, early literacy intervention beginning at age four to improve third grade reading, and HB 833, establishing the teacher residency program. Both are now law. I have worked across the aisle on Appropriations, the School Funding Interim Commission and the Modernization and Risk Analysis Committee, and I will keep doing it on school funding and regional cooperation, transparency, campaign finance reform, property taxes, data center standards, rural healthcare access, and corrections policy that measures results and not just costs. What I will not do is trade an honest answer for a caucus position.

5. Protecting Montanans in the homes they live in is the right principle. DOR's Carbon County projections compare 2026 taxes with and without HB 231 and SB 542. For the homesite category, total taxes rise about 18 percent from 2024 without the package and fall about 23 percent with it: a 41-percentage-point difference. The corresponding reductions are about 44 points for long-term rentals, 17 for commercial property and 1 for agricultural and timber land. These are countywide category totals, not individual tax bills. Second homes and short-term rentals run the opposite way: about 46 percent higher with the package than without it. Those owners deserve a straight explanation. Cabins and vacant lots need another look. I will judge this on the data we review in the next session, and I am open to refining it in 2027 to make it better.

6. Three priorities. First, an outright ban or, at a minimum, guardrails on cryptocurrency kiosks: licensing, daily limits for new customers, plain fraud warnings on the machine, refunds when a first-time victim reports promptly, and blockchain analytics so money can be traced. Several states adopted kiosk safeguards in 2025 and we should learn from what worked. Second, referral paths that function in rural counties, to support reports to the Office of Consumer Protection or a county sheriff. Third, prevention aimed at seniors and veterans, delivered through institutions they already trust. AI-generated voice and video can make these scams far more convincing. We should assume it gets worse and legislate accordingly.

3 citizen-led initiatives will be on Nov. ballot

SEABORN LARSON
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Three of the 10 citizen-proposed ballot measures have been finalized for Montana's general election in November.

Two of them, if passed, would install new provisions in the Montana Constitution; one deals with judicial elections and the other is an attempt to fortify the ballot initiative process itself. A third proposal seeks to take on corporate spending in Montana's elections through changes to state law. A majority of general election voters must approve of a measure for it to pass.

None of the ideas materialized in isolation. Rather, the two constitutional initiatives are in direct response to efforts by Republicans, the state's dominant political party, at the state Legislature. The statutory amendment known as "The Montana Plan" looks to grapple with the mountains of out-of-state money dumped into state elections to influence voters.

Montana's general election is on Nov. 3.

Nonpartisan courts

One of the constitutional initiatives would preserve the nonpartisan status of Montana's judicial elections. The proposal identified as CI-132 follows the Montana Republican Party's efforts at the state Legislature to tilt judicial campaigns into partisan affairs.

The state GOP has declared its opposition to CI-132, while former members of the Supreme Court bench, such as retired Chief Justice Mike McGrath and former Associate Justice Patricia Cotter, have spoken out in support.

"You don't need to be a lawyer to understand that politics doesn't belong in our courts and that we need to make sure judges are accountable to the law and the constitution, not political parties and their money," said retired Dawson County Sheriff Craig Anderson in a press release issued this week by Montanans for Nonpartisan Courts, the campaign group behind the initiative.

Montanans for Nonpartisan Courts has raised considerable sums this year for its efforts. By the time it turned in over 100,000 signatures for the proposal in June, the campaign had raised over \$2.7 million; more than many of this year's congressional candidates.

Ballot measure access

The other constitutional initiative is, in essence, a ballot initiative to preserve the ballot initiative process. Albeit a bit



SONNY TAPIA, INDEPENDENT RECORD

Former U.S. presidential candidate Pete Buttigieg addresses a question asked by a spectator on May 17 in Butte at the Mother Lode Theater.

"You don't need to be a lawyer to understand that politics doesn't belong in our courts and that we need to make sure judges are accountable to the law and the constitution, not political parties and their money."

Craig Anderson,
retired Dawson County Sheriff

wonkier than the other proposals, the campaign running the initiative still piled up over 100,000 signatures in support of the CI-133.

This, too, came on the heels of several Republican efforts to restrict what measures citizens can try to pass through a statewide ballot initiative. CI-133 would require "impartial, predictable, open and timely processes for ballot issues," in part by requiring state officials to



THOM BRIDGE, INDEPENDENT RECORD

A volunteer signature gatherer holds a petition for CI-132 backed by Montanans for Nonpartisan Courts.

provide ample time to gather signatures and blocking them from disqualifying petitions because of technical issues.

Examples of recent voter-approved ballot measures include the legalization of recreational marijuana in 2020 and adding abortion protections to the state constitution in 2024.

Former Secretaries of State Bob Brown, a Republican, and Mike Cooney, a Democrat, both offered their support in a press release issued this week by Montanans Decide, the organization driving the campaign.

"We have overseen dozens of elections and the people's voice should be honored in Montana," Brown said in the press release. "Ballot measures are what hold government accountable to Montanans."

'The Montana Plan'

One of the highest-profile campaigns in Montana this year is I-194, a proposed change in state law to curb corporate spending in Montana's elections. Some candidates have used it as a rallying cry in campaign speeches. Pete Buttigieg, a former Biden administration official who is seen as a likely Democratic presidential candidate, traveled to Montana specifically to promote the effort.

The proposal takes a novel approach to



SONNY TAPIA, INDEPENDENT RECORD

A Montanans for Nonpartisan Courts label sits on a box as Mette Fears, a signature gatherer for CI-132, right, and Lewis and Clark County Elections Supervisor Connor Fitzpatrick cycle through documents on June 10 in Helena.

addressing the U.S. Supreme Court-sized elephant in the room, a 2010 decision known as Citizens United. That decision took the cap off corporate spending in

elections, leading to record-setting cash figures flowing in each cycle. I-194 would get underneath this hurdle by addressing what corporations are in state law, and

removing their ability to spend money in elections.

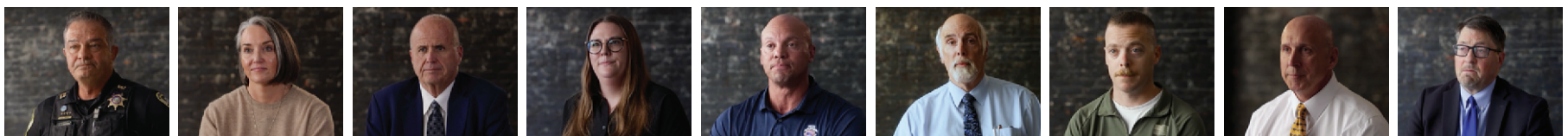
The state GOP formalized its opposition to the proposal in July.

The Montana Chamber of Commerce and other industry groups already tried once this year to head the initiative off in court. The Montana Supreme Court shut down that litigation in a 7-0 decision that determined the legal challenge came too early in the process. The Montana Mining Association was among the plaintiffs in that case and vowed to continue fighting the proposal in defense of free speech.

Hawaii's governor signed a similar measure into law earlier this year. It doesn't go into effect until July 2027, but its passage immediately drew a legal challenge from a nonprofit corporation called Grassroot Institute of Hawaii, represented by the Washington, D.C.-based Institute for Free Speech. A hearing is set for October for the plaintiff to argue why the new law's implementation should be stalled while the case plays out.

Seaborn Larson has worked for the Montana State News Bureau since 2020. His past work includes local crime and courts reporting at the Missoulian and Great Falls Tribune, and daily news reporting at the Daily Inter Lake in Kalispell.

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