

VOTER GUIDE

2026 PRIMARY
ELECTION

The MONTANA STANDARD
Independent Record

The Montana State Capitol in Helena.

THOM BRIDGE,
INDEPENDENT RECORD

LEE MONTANA

2026 VOTER GUIDE

PRIMARY ELECTION

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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 primary 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 primary election, our goal was to give Montana voters a clearer picture of candidates in five 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 five questions for each group of candidates, covering issues we know matter to voters, in-

cluding affordability, taxes, public lands, wildlife management and health care. Those questions were sent to candidates using the email addresses listed on the Montana Secretary of State's candidate filing website.

Questionnaires went out in March, and candidates had about a month 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 100 individuals were invited to take part in this voter guide. About 75% responded.

To help preserve trust in the process, we are publishing answers as they were submitted. Editors reviewed responses for 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 Primary Election Voter Guide: The Questions

U.S. Senate

Question 1. What are your top priorities for Montana in the U.S. Senate if elected, and how would you achieve them?

Question 2. If elected, how would you protect public land access in Montana?

Question 3. About one-third of Americans say they have to cut back on groceries and utility payments in order to afford health care. As a U.S. Senator, what specific policies would you support to lower health care costs for Montanans?

Question 4. Would you have supported any of the recent War Powers resolutions that were proposed to ensure Congressional oversight?

Question 5. Immigration has been a top priority of the Trump administration. How would you evaluate the White House's handling of immigration enforcement, and would you like to see any changes?

Public Service Commission:

Question 1. What are your qualifications to serve on the Public Service Commission?

Question 2. What do you believe is the most pressing issue for the PSC over the next term?

Question 3. What role do you think the PSC should play in addressing data center proposals and the energy that powers them?

Question 4. Lawmakers have considered moving the PSC from an elected body to one whose members are appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Legislature. Which do you believe is the best approach?

Question 5. Infighting has been a common feature of the PSC for several years, often drawing more attention than the commission's actual work. How would you work to settle the discord?

Eastern Congressional District

Question 1. How do you plan to support agricultural producers and rural economies in your district, especially in the face of market pressures and federal regulations?

Question 2. The Montana Stockgrowers Association recently asked the federal government to expand the types of jobs allowed under the foreign agriculture workers program. Do you support finding new routes for foreign-born workers in areas of Montana where the workforce has dwindled?

Question 3. Accessing health care can



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

be particularly challenging for rural Montanans. As a U.S. Representative, what policies would you support to improve access to quality health care in rural communities?

Question 4. Data centers have become a flash point for communities concerned about resources such as water consumption and energy. How do you hope to support development while ensuring Montanans' interests are protected?

Question 5. The eastern congressional district contains five of the seven reservations in Montana. How do you plan to engage with tribal communities to make sure their interests are represented in Washington, D.C.?

Western Congressional District

Question 1. What is your vision for supporting outdoor recreation, tourism, and conservation while also promoting respon-

sible economic development in Montana's fastest growing areas?

Question 2. Housing remains unreachably for many Montanans in the state's more populated areas. What is the role of Congress in addressing housing affordability and what can representatives do to fix it?

Question 3. Do you support President Trump's military action in Iran and Venezuela, and how would you vote on a resolution to reinforce congressional authorization of military action?

Question 4. Data centers have become a flash point for communities concerned about resources such as water consumption and energy. How do you hope to support development while ensuring Montanans' interests are protected?

Question 5. 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?

State Legislature

Question 1. What is your Number One priority if elected to the Montana Legislature?

Question 2. Ongoing spending will outpace revenues by 2027, according to legislative fiscal projections. What cuts do you see as necessary while continuing to provide essential services?

Question 3. Would you support revisiting Montana's property tax reforms from the 2025 session?

Question 4. Do you support grizzly bear delisting? Please elaborate.

Question 5. Do you support a statewide sales tax? Please elaborate.

U.S. SENATE

Charles Walking Child (Rep)



Age: 57

Location: Lewis and Clark County

Education: Bachelor's degree in Human Services, University of Great Falls (2001); additional studies at the University of Montana

Occupation: Contractor

Contact information: Charlesformt@gmail.com, Charleswalkingchildforusenate.com

1. Reining in government growth, overreach, and endless spending. Federal bureaucracy and overregulation strangle Montana's economy, drive up costs, lock up our lands, and create dependency instead of opportunity. We've had enough of big government telling us how to live, farm, or run businesses. Creating good-paying jobs through responsible energy development and infrastructure. Montana has vast resources—oil, gas, coal, renewables—and we need to unleash them safely to lower energy costs, create jobs for families, and reduce foreign dependence. Add modern rail and rural broadband to connect our small towns and boost small ag/business. How I'll achieve it: Champion multiple-use on federal lands with Montana-led input, revive pipelines like Keystone XL under state standards, secure earmarks for infrastructure (roads, water, rail) with local control, and cut regulations that kill projects.

2. If elected, I would protect public land access in Montana by championing true multiple-use management on our federal lands—ensuring Montanans can hunt, fish, recreate, graze livestock, and responsibly develop resources—while cutting out-of-state interference and D.C. overreach that locks people out. Prioritize local and tribal voices in all federal land decisions. Defend and expand recreation access for hunting, fishing, hiking, and family outings. Promote responsible energy and infrastructure without extreme lockups. Cut red tape and litigation abuse.

3. As your U.S. Senator, I would fight to lower health care costs for Montanans with these targeted, practical policies—no big-government overhauls or new entitlements. Increase rural Medicare/Medicaid reimbursements to fair levels that reflect Montana's high costs and low patient volumes, preventing rural hospital and clinic closures. Expand workforce incentives like loan repayment, scholarships, and visa reforms to recruit and keep doctors, nurses, and specialists in rural and tribal areas. Make telehealth permanent and affordable, backed by rural broadband investment, so patients get specialist care without long drives. Cut federal red tape



The American Flag is seen through the front window of the Montana State Capitol on April 18.

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on small providers to reduce administrative costs while keeping patient safety strong. Promote price transparency and competition to stop corporate takeovers that drive up prices.

4. Yes, I would have supported recent War Powers resolutions aimed at enforcing congressional oversight—particularly those directing the President to end unauthorized hostilities unless Congress explicitly authorizes them through a declaration of war or an AUMF. The Constitution is unambiguous: Article I, Section 8 reserves the power to declare war for Congress alone. Our Founders crafted this to prevent any single leader from entangling America in endless, costly conflicts that spill American blood and treasure without the people's representatives weighing in. George Washington's farewell warning against foreign entanglements rings as true today as ever. Montana families and our veterans have paid too high a price for endless, undeclared wars that drain resources better spent at home—on rural hospitals, borders, jobs, and veterans' care. No more blank checks for foreign adventures or elite-driven interventions.

5. Montana relies on seasonal migrant labor for harvests (cherries, hay, sugar beets), livestock work, and other tasks local workers

can't fill. When fear of raids or deportations keeps workers away, crops rot, costs soar, and small producers suffer most. We've seen delays in cherry season and broader disruptions already—threatening generational ranches, tribal operations, rural jobs, and food supply. The Trump administration helped by streamlining H-2A visas (making legal guestworkers easier/cheaper) and pulling back from broad farm raids to avoid chaos. That's progress. But we need more urgency to protect Montana ag while keeping borders secure: Target enforcement at criminals and traffickers—not hard-working seasonal workers. Expand/fix H-2A and legal pathways so farms get reliable labor fast. When skilled H2A workers are kept away on rural operations, it creates lack of workers. Our family farms feed Montana and America.



Kyle Austin (Lib)

Age: 43

Location: Billings

Education: Pharmacist

Occupation: Doctorate of Pharmacy

Contact information: www.kyleaustinmt.com



1. My first priority as United States Senator would be to eliminate wasted government spending, lower the national debt and lower tax's. This will be done by first eliminating big government and government agencies such as the Montana Department of Labor and Industry. My second priority, I would propose the United States move towards a ZERO TARRIFF policy with countries who are our allies and who purchase American products. A zero-tariff policy will lower consumer prices, increase our purchasing power, enhance efficiency through free trade, and allow competition through innovation. My third priority will be to revitalize agriculture. As a 4th Generation Farmer, we can do this by eliminating the barriers of our producers, reducing global dependence, eliminating wasteful spending and redirecting funds to improve infrastructure needs that support our farmers and ranchers. Projects such as building a fertilizer plant in eastern Montana and offering 0% financing through the USDA.

2. This is simple... keep public lands PUBLIC... our public lands are not for sale.

3. As a pharmacist for 18 years, I understand that we have bigger issues with our healthcare system than just high pre-

scription drug prices. We can accomplish all this under my plan called healthcare 2.0. Healthcare 2.0 will create a centralized United States Healthcare corporation to over see all healthcare in the United States, including insurance. Healthcare 2.0 will consolidate all the government healthcare programs to eliminate wasteful spending and ensure every dollar is used for healthcare, not corruption. Healthcare 2.0 will revolutionize healthcare, making healthcare more affordable and accessible than ever while at the same time improving quality.

4. Yes, I would have supported the War Power Resolutions.

5. Immigration has been out of control and it is finally time we took stronger action. We need stronger immigration policy, stronger border security, and we need a way to pay for it. The United States has been invaded by foreign religions who are internally taking over our government and instilling law such as Sharia. This needs to come to an end. I propose the United States imposes an entry fee of \$50 every time a foreign visitor comes to the United States. This will generate roughly \$3.5M per day to cover the costs of our border security and immigration. It will also reduce our national debt and lower taxes for all Americans.



Alani Bankhead (Dem)



Age: 43

Location: Helena

Education: Leadership Consultant

Occupation: BA – Latin American Studies (Penn State), BA – Crime, Law, and Justice (Penn State), MA – International Relations with

a concentration in National Security Studies, United States Air Force Air War College

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1. Accountability. Restoring Constitutional checks and balances. Congress has ceded too much authority to the Executive Branch. Hold government officials accountable for illegal acts and abuse of power via impeachment. End the war against Iran. 2. Affordability. Make housing cheaper. Get venture capital and corporations out of housing/healthcare. Raise the capital gains tax cap from \$250K to \$500K. This will allow people holding onto houses, because they don't want to pay capital gains tax more room to sell without paying taxes. This will open up inventory. Increased supply results in prices going down. Provide tax incentives for builders who build afford-

able houses. Medicaid for all. 3. Protecting the vulnerable. Hold Epstein class accountable for their crimes against the vulnerable. Stronger legislation to protect citizens from violence. Property taxes should be frozen if an individual is drawing social security. 4. Protect public lands. No sale of public lands. Allow corner crossing

2. No sale of public lands. Allow corner crossing.

3. Use excessive defense spending and claw back other fraudulently stolen tax dollars to provide Medicaid for All. The Pentagon spent over \$90 billion in Sep 2025 alone via the "use-lose spending" habit. Military units get a budget, and if they don't spend it every year, they lose what they didn't spend and get less the following year. We can incentivize unused monies to be returned to federal coffers to fund affordable healthcare with zero impact to the military's mission. I am a retired LtCol – I know how these budget cycles work

4. Congress must reassert its Constitutional powers. Our founders created an ingenious system, and the Legislative branch has ceded too many of those powers to the Executive branch. A healthy government is one that has appropriate oversight and accountability

5. The administration's handling of immigration has been unAmerican at best. Unless you have Native American ancestry, we are all immigrants or descendants of immigrants. Ev-

ery reasonable person wants border enforcement that keeps bad actors out. This administration has been abusing their authorities and inappropriately utilizing national security tools for law enforcement functions which is illegal. The ICE agents who were hired after the recent hiring push and loosened training requirements at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center would be revetted and those not meeting federal law enforcement's traditional high standards and qualifications would be removed. The country needs immigration reform too. It takes too long for legal immigrants to obtain citizenship. We must create a better and faster path.



Michael Hummert (Dem)



Age: 67

Location: Helena

Occupation: Candidate for U.S. Senate

Education: 16 years

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1. My top priorities in the U.S. Senate would be to pass legislation regulating artificial intelligence and the corporations that control the algorithms shaping public life, to advance a Balanced Budget Amendment, to pursue

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PUTTING HONESTY & INTEGRITY FIRST

4th Generation Rancher • West Point Graduate • Iraq War Veteran

Rains

★ U.S. CONGRESS ★



Matt's Top Priorities:

- ✓ Bring down gas prices, and housing costs for Montana
- ✓ Give veterans the care they need and deserve
- ✓ Defend public lands and Montana's heritage
- ✓ Expand rural infrastructure
- ✓ Protect access to health care and rural hospitals that Montanans depend on

Learn more about Matt at mattrainsformontana.com

Paid for by Matt Rains for Montana



election reform that restores trust and integrity, and to enact comprehensive immigration reform that serves the national interest. I would work to achieve these goals by building coalitions in both the Senate and the House around issues that Americans across party lines already support. I would speak directly to citizens, lawmakers, and community leaders, encourage grassroots involvement, and keep the focus on what unites us instead of what divides us. If we want to preserve our republic for future generations, Congress must stop the endless bickering and start acting on the common ground that still exists.

2. Public land access in Montana must be protected for future generations, but protection also means safeguarding the air, water, and health of the people who depend on that land. I would oppose policies that let corporations profit while leaving taxpayers and communities with the damage. Whether the project is mining, drilling, or manufacturing, companies must be held responsible for the pollution and long-term cleanup they create. Montana has already paid too high a price in places like Butte, and we should not repeat those mistakes. Protecting public lands also means protecting waterways, groundwater, and the air we breathe. Access matters, but so does ensuring that the land remains clean, usable, and healthy for the people of Montana.

3. Health care costs are crushing American families, and the federal government is already deeply involved in paying for care. Roughly half of Americans receive some form of government-supported health coverage, and Washington already spends enormous sums on health care. Pretending the government is not in the health care business is simply not honest. As a U.S. Senator, I would support streamlining programs, eliminating waste and corruption, and studying what works in other countries and other systems. We need to focus on lowering costs, improving outcomes, and delivering care more efficiently. I would also support reforms that emphasize long-term health through prevention, better diet, exercise, and healthier living. We are spending too much for too little value, and I would support every serious effort to lower health care costs for Montanans.

4. I would have supported Senator Kaine's effort to restore congressional oversight of military action. No president should be able to take this country into offensive hostilities without congressional authorization, except in cases of immediate self-defense. I also believe the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force signed after the September 11 attacks should be repealed. It has been stretched far beyond its original purpose and used by successive presidents to expand executive war-making power. The Constitution gives Congress a central role in matters of war, and that duty must be taken seriously. Whenever possible, Congress should be fully briefed be-

fore force is used. If there is time to consult Congress, that time should be used.

5. The White House is right to enforce immigration law, but enforcement must be lawful, disciplined, and smart. Sending large ICE operations into places like Minneapolis looked more like a show of force than a focused strategy, and that does not build public trust. The Department of Homeland Security, led by Secretary Kristi Noem, has a duty to carry out enforcement professionally and within the law. Citizens also have a duty not to physically interfere with armed federal agents. Peaceful protest is always legitimate; putting yourself in the middle of an armed operation is reckless.

I support requiring body cameras for ICE agents and clear standards for respectful treatment of everyone, including people who do not speak English. I have also written a 120-page immigration reform plan to fix the system at its core, regardless of who is president.



Reilly Neill (Dem)



Age: 52

Location: Livingston

Occupation: Elected Montana State House Representative; former newspaper owner, publisher and editor; worked in leadership inside of Montana organizing for women's healthcare rights,

culminating in the passage of CI-128, which enshrined women's healthcare in the Montana Constitution.

Education: Attended both University of Montana and Montana State University

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1. On day one, I'm ready to govern and lead. I'm the only candidate who has written legislation on a bipartisan basis and gotten it signed into law. Top priorities include addressing the for-profit healthcare model and working towards single-payer Universal Healthcare. Tariffs are hurting our farmers. We need stable markets and a farm bill that works for Montana along with mandatory COOL (Country of Origin Labeling). My proposal for an Irrigation Infrastructure Act will build resiliency ahead of need. We must address economic pressure in our communities when it comes to housing. I'll work for veteran and low-income assistance to expand access to housing. While fighting to protect access and management of public lands, I will also work to defend Montana's water rights from data center projects that will strain our existing resources on public and working lands. Finally, we don't need to send Montana's sons and daughters to war without the full approval of Congress and the American people.

2. Montana is not for sale. We need to pro-

tect public access and prevent selloffs. We need to strengthen public land protections by fully funding land management agencies. Long-term Federal funding is critical to protecting public lands. If we do choose to develop our resources, we need responsible economic use that benefits Montana communities: recreation, grazing, and development, all with clear guardrails. I will ensure Montana voices are part of these discussions.

3. The problem with for-profit healthcare is it's for profit. This is the richest country in the world. Montanans, our veterans in rural areas, shouldn't have to drive three hours and take a day off work to get to a doctor. I've built a Universal Healthcare Act that will help stabilize and fund rural healthcare systems, expand the workforce, and bring costs down. When I get to D.C., I will stand up for the 77,000 Montanans who don't have healthcare anymore. I will make fixing this issue a priority. Corporations have turned healthcare into for-profit businesses and no one is getting the care they need. I will fight to change this.

4. Yes. I come from a military family. I didn't serve myself but I thank our veterans for their service. We don't need to send Montana's sons and daughters to war without the full approval of Congress and the American people. Congress is not doing their jobs to hold the executive branch accountable. I will always come back to listen to my constituents in Montana. I'm here to support Montanans, not any one president. I will always come home and listen to the Montana people. On the ground, Montanans tell me right now that they want Congress to have war powers, not any individual party or person.

5. Contributing members of society who are in the process of becoming legal are not criminals. We absolutely need changes to immigration. Our immigration system has been broken for decades. This country is built on immigrants and our legacy and heritage of welcoming all to our shores. We need to have a streamlined, legal, immigration process that is efficient and effective. We don't need to defund ICE; we need to redirect ICE to deport criminals, not law-abiding individuals contributing to our communities.



Lee Calhoun (Rep)

Age: 75

Location: Whitefish

Occupation: Retired Engineer / Small Business Owner

Education: University of Pittsburgh BSME

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Photo not available

1. The cost of living in the US is too damn high! I would focus on four things in an effort to improve the cost of living.

1. Universal Healthcare – It is time to fix our broken healthcare system.

2. Roll Back of Corporate Welfare – Let the Epstein Class pay their fair share.

3. Term Limits and Mandatory Retirement Age for all branches of government – It's time to end government by the aged.

4. Energy Costs – Level the playing field and let the free market decide winners and losers.

2. Public lands are a sacred resource for all Americans. I would be hyper vigilant for any effort to sell off or degrade that resource. We should also modernize the value we all receive from that resource.

3. Nearly a dozen of Montana's rural hospitals are in danger of closing due to lack of funding caused by our broken medical system in America. Americans pay 50% more for health care than the next most expensive system in the industrialized world even though we have the worst measurable outcomes of all other industrialized countries. Let that sink in. We pay way more and get less.

The solution to this problem is actually simple, America needs a universal health care system. There are for profit and not for profit examples that work very well but no one has had the political will to buck the special interests that prevent our citizens from getting what they need and deserve in a health care system. The financial benefits to both small and large businesses of a universal health care system would also be huge. Large businesses could better compete globally and small businesses would not be strapped by health insurance costs.

4. I'm old enough to remember this is my 4th oil war and young enough to do whatever I can from within the US Senate to make it stop.

5. Everyone wants secure borders and freedom from criminals. This administration has made a mockery of their campaign promises to secure the border and remove criminals. Murdering American citizens for using their 1st and 2nd amendment rights is unacceptable and the responsible parties at all levels need to be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.



Kurt Alme (Rep)

Age: 59

Location: Billings

Occupation: Former U.S. Attorney, District of Montana (twice nominated by President Trump)

Education: Custer County District High School (Miles City); University of Colorado,



Bachelor of Science in business; Harvard Law School, law degree.

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1. I'm running to make life more affordable,

make our communities safer, and protect our way of life. And I have the experience to get it done.

I'm a budget and tax hawk. I know how to balance a budget and cut taxes to put money back into the pockets of Montanans to make life more affordable. As Revenue Director, I led the largest income tax rate reduction in state history. As Budget Director, we balanced the budget, delivered one of Montana's largest tax cuts, and helped make Montana debt-free.

As U.S. Attorney, twice nominated by President Trump, I know what it takes to make our communities safer. Under my leadership last year, we went after violent criminals and drug traffickers, and criminal prosecutions hit a 20-year high. I will work with President Trump again to secure our border, dismantle the cartels, and protect our communities.

Finally, I will protect our way of life by protecting our Second Amendment rights, keeping boys out of girls' sports and securing our elections.

2. Public lands are part of our way of life. We must keep them in public hands and protect Montanans' right to hike, hunt, fish, and recreate. I've lived all across our state – from Great Falls to Dillon, Victor, Helena, Miles City, and Billings. Some of my best memories were spent with my family – as a son and a dad – on our public lands. This way of life is worth protecting.

We must ensure Montanans have access to the public lands we've enjoyed for generations and find commonsense ways to expand public lands access, while protecting private property rights. Our kids and grandkids deserve the same way of life that we enjoy. We also have a duty to manage federal lands to benefit Montanans. Local Montanans must be heard, and their input must drive decisions on public lands policies. As Senator, I will fight back against federal overreach and radical activist groups who lock up public lands, impede responsible land management, and destroy businesses and jobs.

3. Montanans still feel the impacts of President Biden's runaway spending and unchecked inflation. Deficit spending causes higher prices. The best way to make life more affordable is to rein in spending and keep taxes low to put money back in Montanans' pockets. We need fiscal responsibility in Washington.

To lower health care costs and increase access to quality care, we need to take a patient-centered approach that empowers consumers, expands choice, and boosts competition. Price transparency will allow Montanans to shop when considering medical care, with prices posted for consumers to see. Also, expanded opportunities for self-employed individuals and small businesses to band together to receive affordable coverage with protections for preexisting conditions are critical. In addition, tens of billions of dollars are lost to health care fraud each year. Waste, fraud, and abuse

must be stopped to lower costs. Health care is too expensive. I'm ready to deliver solutions as Senator.

4. As Senator, I'll work to ensure our Commander-in-Chief has the tools needed to protect Americans – while making sure Congress does its job and Montanans' voices are heard. The Constitution is clear: Congress holds the power to declare war. Both parties have let that responsibility slide for decades. Congress needs to assert that power.

But the President must have the ability to act quickly to protect Americans. Tying our Commander-in-Chief and troops' hands behind their backs, like recent proposals in the Senate would have done, is dangerous. Especially when the world's largest state sponsor of terror is seeking nuclear weapons. As your Senator, I'll insist Congress exercise its constitutional war-making authority to keep our sons and daughters out of forever wars, while ensuring the President has sufficient flexibility to defend us.

5. Montanans firmly rejected President Biden's open-borders policies and elected President Trump to secure the border. And he has delivered.

President Trump nominated me as U.S. Attorney in his first term and again in his second, because I aggressively protected our communities from deadly drugs, cartels, and criminal organizations invading our country and killing Americans. Under my leadership, we hit a 20-year high for criminal prosecutions, targeting violent criminals and drug traffickers to keep our communities safe.

We must continue to secure the border, support law enforcement, prioritize the prosecution of violent criminals, and investigate drug trafficking organizations all the way up to the cartels – so we can tear them out by their roots. We must also focus on prevention and treatment to shrink the market for drug trafficking and restore our citizens to health. I look forward to working with President Trump again to secure our borders and make our communities safer.



Seth Bodnar (Ind)

Age: 47

Location: Missoula

Occupation: Former Green Beret, Businessman and Former President of the University of Montana

Education: I graduated from West Point with a degree in economics. After-



wards, I was honored to receive the Rhodes and Truman Scholarship and I graduated from Oxford with two degrees, one in economics, the other in comparative social policy.

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1. Revive the American Dream: Housing is out of reach, childcare breaks the budget, and both parties offer culture-war theater while costs keep climbing. We need to expand housing supply by cutting federal red tape and zoning barriers that drive up construction costs and lock Montanans out of ownership. I will support tax incentives for workforce housing development in small-town Montana communities and I'll work to lower childcare costs by expanding access to tax credits and eliminating regulatory burdens on small providers.

We need substantive reform in Washington. Party bosses use our institutions to protect themselves while Montanans get left behind. I support a ban on Members of Congress trading stocks. I support financial transparency requirements and conflict-of-interest rules for members of Congress. I support nonpartisan redistricting to end gerrymandering to restore competitive elections that serve voters. I believe we need term limits and age limits on Members of Congress.

2. Public lands are the foundation of Montana's way of life, hunting and fishing heritage, and the multibillion dollar outdoor economy. I oppose any sale or transfer of federal public lands – in Montana or any other state. Public lands belong in public hands. I will also support federal funding for land management agencies- the Forest Service, BLM, and Fish & Wildlife Service so they have the staff and

resources to manage the lands they're responsible for. I am deeply opposed to the recent announcement that the Forest Service will close regional offices and 57 research facilities, including two in Montana. These closures, at the orders of bureaucrats in Washington, will make our public lands less secure, impacting the health of our forests especially as wildfires now happen all year round. The bottom line is that when it comes to our public lands, Washington needs to take its orders from the Montanans that live, work, hunt, fish, and recreate on our public lands, not the other way around.

3. The way Washington operates makes no sense. While the government is shut down, Americans are waiting in long lines, and the nation is at war, Congress goes on vacation. Tariffs drive up prices for our businesses, farmers, ranchers, and those costs show up in the grocery store. Diesel is now over \$5/gallon making everything more expensive for Montanans. Last year's budget bill will kick tens of thousands of Montanans off their health care and put rural health facilities at risk – so even when folks can afford care, they sometimes have to drive to or more hours to get it. When I get to Washington, my priority will be, and will always be Montana. We need policies that not only make sense, but make life easier, not harder for working men and women in our state

4. As someone who served this nation in combat, I know firsthand the gravity of send-

“Megan Lane is exactly the kind of leader this community deserves: thoughtful, grounded, and deeply committed to the people she serves. As a science teacher, she brings a deep respect for education, critical thinking, and preparing the next generation for success. Megan will bring both heart and strength to this work. She understands our values, listens with intention, and isn't afraid to roll up her sleeves to get things done. I'm proud to support her and excited for what she'll accomplish.” —**Melissa Romano**
Current educator,
former legislator
for HD 80

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HOUSE DISTRICT 80

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PO BOX 4602 * HELENA, MT 59604 * MARY AHMANN-HIBBARD, TREASURER

ing America's sons and daughters to war. Yes, I would support a War Powers resolution because it is the Constitutional responsibility of Congress to declare war, and Congress needs to do its job to prevent the brave members of our military from being fighting in another forever war in the Middle East. Congress is failing in its Constitutional responsibilities and has ceded far too much power to the executive branch. Neither party demonstrated leadership in the lead up to the war with Iran; instead waiting until our forces were already engaged to declare their support or opposition. I'm running as an Independent because our political system has been broken by party elites who care more about trading power back and forth than doing what's right for Montana, the American people, and most importantly, our men and women in uniform.

5. Both parties have failed on immigration enforcement over the last few decades. I support strong, consistent border security - both at the southern and northern border - with the resources, personnel, and technology to get the job done. We can do this while also protecting Americans' Constitutional rights.



Christopher Kehoe (Dem)



Age: 40
Location: Missoula
Occupation: Theatre Artist and Arts Administrator
Education: Currently earning a second MFA from University of Montana in Missoula
Contact information: www.christopherkehoe.com

1. 1. Protecting communities from private AI industry land acquisition. 2. Improving mental and physical health outcomes. 3. Making political discourse healthy again.

Very large, very powerful data companies are practically salivating over using Montana land to house data centers. Communities need to have a controlling seat at this table. The economic and environmental costs of data center construction and maintenance (which are astronomical) need to be disclosed to the public, and any data center built needs to continually serve the community in real, material ways. Reforming Section 230 and gutting Citizens United would do wonders for our collective mental health. Every 2 years, we're inundated with a torrent of awful political advertising, designed to keep us terrified and paranoid. By both reforming Section 230 (holding social media accountable for content) and ending Citizens United (stopping out-of-state political spending), we can make our relationship to politics healthy again.

2. Montana land is not for sale, full stop. I would vote against any legislation that would see the federal government sell public land



THOM BRIDGE, INDEPENDENT RECORD

The Montana State Capitol in Helena, Mont.

to private industry or to a foreign country. If the State of Montana wants any public land sold, then it must be done with the full lock-step support of the county and city (and reservation, if applicable) the land resides in. Once public land is gone, it's gone forever, so any sale of public land needs every possible stakeholder to freely agree to the terms of sale.

3. I'm a big supporter of universal health care. Even a modest policy that covers basic services would exert a huge influence in overall health care costs, making preventative health care more accessible to the average American and letting costs be handled by our tax code (I'd also look to increase both the number of tax brackets and how they scale at higher incomes). Short of the above, I would reimplement (if not expand) the health care subsidies and SNAP benefits that the so-called Big, Beautiful Bill eliminated.

4. Not only do I support all the recent War Powers resolutions, I would look to amend the 1973 resolution from 30 days down to 7. War has become unimaginably faster, more lethal, and more complicated than it was in 1973, so we need to modernize this oversight to match our modern reality. The violation of the War Powers Resolution should be an immediate impeachable offense—what else could put so many American lives in needless danger than a capricious, ego-driven war that Congress has not approved?

5. Absolutely heinous. ICE's deployment and tactics have been nothing short of barbaric, and this administration literally has blood on its hands. It is imperative that ICE be re-scoped to be an administrative agency exclusively, which coordinates with local law

enforcement to correct any immigration infraction. Local law enforcement knows the communities they serve best, and can advocate for any lapsed-status immigrants who are not an immediate danger to the community. "Illegal" immigrants are, first and foremost, the victims of an opaque, near-impossible naturalization process—not nefarious individuals looking to game a system. If Christ implores us to welcome the stranger, then ICE is about as non-Christian of an agency as one can imagine.



FOR PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION DISTRICT 1

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



Jeremy Trebas (Rep)



Age: 41
Location: Great Falls
Occupation: Accountant
Education: MSU Bozeman – Business / Accounting
Contact information: www.jeremytrebas.com

1. CPA, current legislator (8 years experience at end of term), studied Montana energy issues for years

2. Generation and Distribution capacity – especially as data centers high demand for

electricity look to locate in Montana.

3. I think the PSC should have a cooperative relationship with the Legislature and work with policymakers to protect ratepayers through changes in law.

4. I strongly think electing the PSC is the best approach. I don't think voters want more power centralized into Helena.

5. I'm low drama and all about the business of making sure the rates set are balanced between being affordable and providing appropriate ROI for companies.



Jeff Pattison (Rep)



Age: 66
Location: Glasgow
Occupation: Farm/rancher
Education: Glasgow HS, NMC Havre, Mother Nature, Montana legislator, advocacy boards.
Contact information: pat-tison.jeff@gmail.com, pat-tisonformontana.com, FB Pattison for public service commissioner, 406-263-5000

tisonformontana.com, FB Pattison for public service commissioner, 406-263-5000

1. I'm not a career politician—I'm a Montana advocate who understands energy, listens to people, and will fight to keep power reliable, affordable, and in the hands of the people. I've attended hearings, participated via zoom, written letters, attended learning events and personally meet with commissioners to better understand the issues. Rate increases should never be automatic. Utilities have to prove they're necessary and justified. My job on the PSC would be to make sure Montana ratepayers get reliable service at the lowest reasonable cost.

2. I'd bet data centers will become more "in the headlines" and ferreting out the truth, asking hard questions and demanding real answers

3. Large industrial users like data centers must cover the infrastructure costs they require so Montana families and small businesses aren't left paying the bill. As a farmer and rancher, I also believe we must be good stewards of resources like electricity and water. Development is welcome – but ratepayers come first.

4. I'm a firm believer in our first amendment and the right to elect who we want to represent us.

5. Disagreement is healthy—dysfunction isn't. My focus will be on doing the job professionally and keeping the PSC focused on what matters: reliable, affordable power for Montana families. Montanans deserve a Public Service Commission that works as hard as they do. As a farmer and rancher, I've learned you don't always agree, but you still have to sit down, solve problems, and get the work done.



FOR PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION DISTRICT 5

Annie Bukacek (Rep)



Age: 68

Location: I am registered to vote in Helena, and travel back and forth from Kasilpell and Helena.

Occupation: Public Service Commissioner and physician

Education: doctorate

Contact information: bu-

kacek4PSC.com

1. I am in my fourth year of serving as Public Service Commissioner honestly, conscientiously, and effectively. I understand the responsibilities, policies, and procedures and work well with the excellent PSC staff. I made campaign promises in 2022 and I kept them... including sharing extensive research findings with the public. To do the commissioner job properly, a person must have an intense work ethic, be a good listener, do independent research and skillfully apply analytic tools to large volumes of complex information in order to draw reasoned conclusions and solve problems. My education level is doctorate. Decades of being a medical doctor and grassroots advocate have taught me those needed skills. I have fine-tuned those skills and applied them to every case that comes before us at the PSC. Right now, more than ever, the public needs Public Service Commissioners who go above and beyond the call of duty... and that is me.

2. Next term, the focus will be planning ahead for Montana's growing energy needs within an aging power grid. Maintaining resource adequacy remains the biggest issue because of the soaring demand for power and water. The Public Service Commission has a role in ensuring the future needs are met and at the best possible cost, based on balancing affordability and reliability. We do this through expert quality decision making based on careful analysis of complex information presented to us. Analysis includes careful scrutiny of the information we collect from the utility companies we regulate.

3. The PSC currently has three open dockets pertaining to data centers. Because they are open dockets, there is little I can rightfully say about them. The commission's task is to keep an open mind, read pre-hearing testimony, ask questions during the hearing that make for a robust evidentiary record, review the evidence, and make a decision. The purpose of this process is to fulfill the goal of the PSC of ensuring access to affordable, reliable, service from the utilities it regulates.

4. There has never been a time in history more important than right now, for PSC Commissioners to be directly answerable to the citizens of Montana who elect them. I have

experienced the problems firsthand with elected commissioners, and there would be a different set of problems if the commissioners were all appointed. PSC leadership has been working on a strategic plan since 2021 to mitigate some of the problems with commissioners being elected. Many good improvements have been made and there is more work to do. Legislators have the jurisdiction to decide if the PSC is to be elected, appointed, or a hybrid of elected and appointed.

5. PSC leadership has been working on a strategic plan since 2021, starting two years before I began my term. Part of the strategic plan has been the development of an internal policy manual. Our policy manual covers many topics, including policies and procedures for dealing effectively with human behavior. The PSC is a great place to work in part because of the high quality of the majority of the people who work there. Many good improvements have been made at the PSC through strategic planning, and there is more work to do. I am pleased to be part of the process to improve the performance and reputation of the PSC.



Kevin Hamm (Dem)



Age: 53

Location: East Helena

Occupation: IT Consulting

Education: Some College

Contact information: kevinhamm.com, campaign@kevinhamm.com, 406-417-0070

1. My family has been in the telecom industry since the Bell System's early days, influencing my understanding of regulated services and captive rate payers. I was a partner and later CEO of a small local internet company, navigating regulations for over five years. My experience includes phone service, fiber internet, and electrical services, engaging with these systems throughout my life. My tech journey began early, training local architects on AutoCAD. I'm driven by curiosity about system interconnections and use my skills to analyze and optimize processes. Growing up in Montana instilled a strong commitment to community investment, viewing neighbors and towns as vital resources. I've served on boards like Queen City Ballet and Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies. I also founded the Happiness & Joy Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that generates significant revenue for Helena annually through the Montana Pride celebration, which I've directed for over a decade.

2. Making sure that the PSC actually does the job it's supposed to do. Electricity rates have surged nearly 40% in four years, with costs tripling since deregulation, despite flat residential demand. This is due

to more efficient devices requiring no more electricity than our vastly smaller residential population in 1996. Northwestern's rate increases, approved by the GOP, continue to fall on residential customers but our demand is still flat. Additionally, residential customers pay up to twice as much per kW as industrial or commercial customers, a pricing disparity with no justification. A kilowatt should cost the same for everyone, and this abusive pricing where individuals and families subsidize the costs for industry is not only wrong, it's why the PSC was put in place.

It doesn't have to continue this way, just vote responsibly.

3. Datacenters, as currently planned, are excessively harmful to their locations and should be halted. The PSC has the power to ensure that infrastructure upgrades needed for these facilities are funded by the data-center owners, not Montanans. The rise in electricity demand should always be directed to the customers creating it, rather than burdening residential users. While water use and pollution are not directly regulated by the PSC, we can still initiate discussions on what benefits Montanans. Accepting AI companies' assurances without scrutiny is unacceptable. Montana's history shows that wealthy interests often deceive to exploit the state—from destructive mines to land acquisitions that restrict public ac-

cess. These greedy elites profit from Montana's beauty while leaving its residents to bear the costs. This must end, and the PSC can lead the charge.

4. The only thing lawmakers should be considering with the PSC is going back to regulatory statutes that were removed in 1996. That change was done with lies and deception presented to the legislature and to the governor and if you ask any of them they all will tell you it was a mistake and shouldn't've happened. Moving the PSC to be an appointed position just makes the commissioners kowtow to the governor and that's not what the commission is supposed to do either. The Public Service Commission should be non-partisan and should be working for the people of Montana. Not the companies, not the out-of-state interests, the people of Montana. Period.

It's not hard to do right by the people of Montana: rates need to be lowered, infrastructure needs to be invested in, and the C-Suite of NWE doesn't need to make millions of dollars each, ever, and that should change. Vote for someone willing to put in the work to get there. It's not impossible, it's just going to take backbone and time.

5. This is a job, and an incredibly impactful one at that. What's amazing to me is that the current crop of commissioners have continued this infighting because none of them can even stand to be in the same

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room unless it's required. Having the ability to talk to people who fundamentally disagree with you isn't that hard, I've done it my entire life.

And yes, if I'm the only progressive on the commission it's going to be contentious in how we do our jobs, but that doesn't mean it's disrespectful or involves backstabbing and other nonsense. I know full well that the continuing commissioners know me and while they wouldn't choose me, they also know that if needs be they can talk to me and we can build consensus. It's not a kingdom, it's a commission, and that job is worth doing and doing well, no matter what anyone thinks of each other personally.

I don't have to grab a beer with you to listen and work with you. It's just not that hard.



Joe Dooling (Rep)



Age: 50

Location: North Helena Valley

Occupation: Farmer/Rancher

Education: MSU ad business/economics

Contact information: 406-431-3510, joe.dooling@

outlook.com

1. My qualifications come from a lifetime of working the land, running a business, and serving my community – exactly the kind of real-world experience that shapes what Montana ratepayers actually need from their PSC. I am a third-generation Montanan, a farmer and rancher in the Helena Valley. Running an agricultural operation means managing costs, navigating energy and water infrastructure, and making hard financial decisions without a safety net. I know what utility bills mean to a family budget because I live it every month. Beyond the farm, I have a record of public service and leadership. I served as Chairman of the Lewis and Clark County Republican Party, sat on the Lewis and Clark County Fairgrounds Board, and was a member of the Montana Stockgrowers Association. I was also appointed by President Trump to the Farm Service Agency Committee – a federal appointment that required demonstrated trustworthiness and sound judgment.

2. Every month, ratepayers open their bills and wonder why they're paying more for the same service – or less reliable service than before. The PSC exists to stop that from happening, and right now it isn't doing its job well enough. Rate cases have become exercises in rubber-stamping utility requests rather than rigorous scrutiny on behalf of the people paying the bills. That has to change. Every proposed rate increase must be examined as if the money is coming out of your

own pocket – because for Montana families, it is. Closely connected to rising costs is the threat to grid reliability. Montana winters are not a theoretical problem. When temperatures drop to twenty below zero, families need power that works. The PSC must defend baseload generation – coal, hydro, and advanced nuclear – against policies that sacrifice reliability on the altar of ideology. An affordable rate means nothing if the lights go out.

3. Data centers present a genuine challenge for Montana ratepayers, and the PSC needs to approach them with clear eyes and a firm commitment to consumer protection. Large industrial energy users like data centers can place enormous new demands on the grid. If utilities use those demands to justify infrastructure upgrades or rate base expansions that ultimately get passed on to residential and small business ratepayers, the PSC must say no. The people heating their homes in January should not be subsidizing the energy appetites of technology companies that chose Montana for its cheap power. At the same time, the PSC should not be reflexively hostile to economic development. New industrial load, if properly structured, can sometimes improve system economics for all ratepayers. The question the PSC must ask in every case is simple: does this deal benefit Montana ratepayers, or does it just benefit the utility and the data center operator?

4. Elected. Without question. The PSC makes decisions that affect every Montana household's monthly expenses. When a commissioner votes to approve a rate increase, that vote reaches into the budgets of families, farmers, ranchers, and small businesses across the state. The people bearing those costs deserve the final say in who makes those decisions. Appointment systems breed insulation. When commissioners are chosen by a governor and confirmed by a legislature, they become accountable to those institutions – not to the ratepayers they are supposed to protect. The distance between a commissioner and an ordinary Montanan grows wider, and the opportunities for political and corporate influence to fill that gap grow accordingly. Montana has a long tradition of keeping important decisions close to the people they affect. The PSC should stay elected.

5. The discord at the PSC is a symptom of a deeper problem: commissioners who have lost sight of who they work for. When the primary job is protecting ratepayers, there is less room for turf wars, personality conflicts, and procedural maneuvering. People who are focused on doing the actual work don't have time for political knife-fighting. The first step toward a functional commission is electing the people who understand that their job is to serve Montana families – not to accumulate institutional power or settle personal scores.



David Sanders (Rep)



Age: 66

Location: Helena

Occupation: Chief of Staff, Office of the Montana State Auditor

Education: College of William and Mary BA in Economics and Philosophy, minor in Government; Wil-

lamette University Graduate Studies in Management

Contact information: www.SandersforMontana.com, 406-475-5101

1. I served as the Executive Director of the Montana Public Service Commission where I won a Governor's Award for Excellence in Performance in 2024. I currently serve as the Chief of Staff for the Office of the Montana State Auditor and Commissioner of Securities and Insurance. I have extensive experience successfully managing Montana regulatory agencies and federal, state and local government agencies. Agencies I have led have received the "Innovations in Government" award from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and became the first government organizations to achieve international quality assurance recognition under the ISO 9001 quality assurance standard.

2. Restoring the PSC's credibility as a regulatory body focused on its mission rather than on conflict among the Commissioners. I also believe the PSC must place a greater emphasis on protecting Montana residential ratepayers who are facing an affordability crisis.

3. The PSC has an important regulatory role in ensuring that residential ratepayers are not forced to shoulder the financial burden of data center proposals which place extraordinary demands on our power grid. As President Trump said in his most recent State of the Union Address, "ratepayer protection pledges must be used to prevent residential ratepayers from having to pay for the data centers of private, for-profit tech companies."

4. I have seen the PSC function well as an elected body and we have all seen it devolve into its current state of disrepair over the last year due to personal animosities and ambitions. I could support some meaningful structural reforms to the PSC, but changing from an elected body to an appointed one is no guarantee of future success. I think that there should be some level of qualifications for candidates for the PSC as we have for other state offices.

5. I was able to facilitate positive, production working relationships at the PSC when I was the Executive Director as recently as 2024. Focusing governmental organizations on their core missions and goals is my professional specialty and something for which

I have a special skill set. As a Commissioner, I am confident that I can work with my colleagues to return the PSC to its core mission in relatively short order.



Eastern Congressional District

Note: One candidate for Eastern Congressional District, Troy Downing (Rep), did not participate in this questionnaire.

Brian J. Miller (Dem)



Age: 54

Location: Helena

Education: Law Degree-University of Montana (2007). Philosophy, B.A.-Emory University (1995)

Occupation: Attorney in the practice of civil litigation in state and federal courts

throughout Montana

Contact information: www.miller4congress.com, brian@miller4congress.com; Facebook (Brian Miller), X (bjmiller1972), TikTok (@brianmiller904), and LinkedIn (Brian Miller)

1. First, we must end the War in Iran immediately. This is a 911 situation. We are seeing several extremely damaging effects from this unconstitutional and criminal war on Montana Ag. These effects include, not are not limited to: skyrocketing diesel prices, skyrocketing fertilizer prices, and a dangerous contraction of international trade. In order to support our Montana agricultural community, I will not vote for one penny of funding for the Department of War until all of our military assets are out of the Middle East. Beyond that, we need to immediately repeal the Canadian tariffs. I have spoken to farmers and ranchers in Montana who have had trade deals destroyed because of these Canadian tariffs. If elected, one of the first things I will do is take a trade delegation of Montana farmers and ranchers to Canada to try to mend fences with our neighbors to the North and apologize for the disrespect that has been shown to them by Trump. We need Canada and they need us.

2. If the Stockgrowers Association is serious about protecting ranchers, they need to do a lot better than that. If they are serious, and not just playing politics, they will call for an immediate end to Trump's mass deportation policy and call on Congress to pass a 21st century immigration reform bill. No one in their right mind thinks that any immigrant from anywhere is going to come to America when they could be thrown in detention and hurt. Trump caused this and no one in Montana has been saying anything about it; now it's at a

crisis level. I am disappointed in the failure of leaders in Montana's agricultural community to speak out against Trump's mass deportation policy when they all know good and well that immigrant labor is vital to the functioning of our Montana agricultural economy. If elected, I will do everything I can to change that. The Montana Stockgrowers need to step up quick on this before ranching is dead in Montana. Half measures will not suffice.

3. There are two things which are making it impossible for us to have a good healthcare system in America: greed and stupidity. We must switch to a non-profit based model for healthcare. We want doctors, nurses, and providers to make good money, and reduce the amount that hospital CEOs and administrators are making, so more money is available for patient care. The issues specifically with rural providers can be addressed in part with using better technologies that will allow patients to monitor their health at home with the assistance of professionals via tele-health; so this is going to require us to have better internet accessibility in rural Montana. We can also maximize the use of diagnostic AI to provide care to people without always having them visit clinics. But I would also like to see us develop facilities throughout our rural communities based on data-driven analysis which shows the kinds of procedures and services that these communities really need for good patient care.

4. AI holds the promise of great increases in economic productivity for the American economy, but we have to find a measured way to build data capacity. First, data centers cannot have negative impacts on the environment in which they operate. The tech companies may not like it, but they are going to have to build in a way that costs them more, but is sustainable. Second, consumer rates cannot be increased by data centers. Again, the tech billionaires may not like it, but they are going to pay higher rates so those costs don't get passed on to us. Third, local control is critical, and if a community doesn't want a data center, that's the end of the story. Fourth, I want to see these big companies who build data centers taxed appropriately to pay their share and that money used to benefit our state. If we do this right, it could be a win for the people since our colder climate is the type of environment that is conducive to these data centers; but we have to be smart about it.

5. We have a sad and tragic history when it comes to tribal-federal relations; it is a history filled with hatred, genocidal policies, and a lack of respect. In order to build trust, we must respect tribal sovereignty. Federal representatives must take time to listen to the perspective of the tribal nations and understand what is important to them and how they see the world. The federal government should be humble about this. What I would like to see are federal-tribal plans that are built from the

ground up, directed by the tribes, and supported by the federal government. Ultimately, tribes want to be completely and totally self-sufficient, and that should be the goal, working in partnership; but it will take some time to get there and we have to be patient. The tribes have many brilliant, capable and professional leaders; they know what needs to be done to move their communities forward in a way that is consistent with their cultural, spiritual, and environmental viewpoints.



Sam Lux (Dem)

Age: 30

Location: Great Falls

Education: Early high school graduate with vet tech, software development, and farrier vocational training

Occupation: Farrier

Contact information: www.

luxformontana.com, lux@luxformontana.com, 406-866-8018, All Social Media's: luxformontana



1. I will establish a federally maintained cost-of-living standard through the BLS, and use it to index the federal minimum wage with automatic annual adjustments. Second, I will roll back tariffs, strengthen international trade, pass mCOOL, secure Right to Repair,

and abolish the estate tax on family-owned farms. I will continue introducing single-issue legislation to bypass gridlock and have already secured national support to move these policies forward on day one. Third, I will stand with workers and collaborate directly with union locals to ensure all infrastructure and economic development projects are built worker-first, with strong protections, fair wages, and real job opportunities. Fourth, I will introduce a rural infrastructure bill to expand access to primary and mental healthcare, vocational training, and job placement. I will expand broadband access and fund critical projects like the Milk River Project to restore the foundation rural communities depend on

2. Absolutely. It is imperative that we address the workforce shortage in our agricultural sector, and I support all efforts to do so.

3. I support universal healthcare, specifically a single payer system, and I will work to implement one that guarantees coverage for every American, with the freedom to opt out. Healthcare is not a luxury, it is a fundamental human right. Right now, rural Montanans face some of the worst barriers to care, from hospital closures to long travel distances. That system is broken, and I will not accept it. My focus is on delivering real results: full coverage without deductibles or network restrictions, the ability to negotiate drug prices, and a serious expansion of rural healthcare so communities like ours are not left in medi-

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Montana voters deserve an honest conversation about what this race is really about.

This isn't a city council seat. It's not the state legislature. It's the United States Senate.

And yet, much of this primary conversation is focused on smaller, local-level concerns or avoids the biggest issue entirely: a federal government that is \$39 trillion in debt and heading in the wrong direction.

We are facing decisions in the next few years that will define the future of this country – rising national debt, the impending 2034 depletion of the Social Security trust fund, and a government that continues to spend without a plan to stabilize itself.

These are not abstract problems. They affect every working family, every paycheck, and every future generation.

Before you vote, take the time to review all four candidates' websites. Look at their plans. Ask yourself who is actually addressing the long-term future of your children – and who is not. And just as importantly, consider who is best prepared to represent Montana Democrats in the general election.

We can continue down the same path and accept the consequences – or we can choose a different direction.

I'm running because ignoring these realities is no longer an option.

I support a Balanced Budget Amendment to restore fiscal discipline. I support term limits and age limits to bring accountability back to Washington. I support campaign finance reform and a Voter Protection Amendment to reduce concentrated influence and return power to the people. I also support hard federal oversight to control the billionaire

corporatists developing AI before they finish controlling us.

I've also developed a comprehensive immigration proposal because border security and economic stability are directly connected.

This campaign is not about managing symptoms. It's about fixing the system.

Democrats can't fix this alone. Republicans can't fix it alone either. Too often, we get

pulled into divisions that keep us from addressing the problems we all know are there.

It is time for hard accountability.



✓ VOTE

MICHAEL HUMMERT FOR U.S. SENATE

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cal deserts. Care should be between you and your doctor, no one else. I will also expand and strengthen Medicare, Medicaid, and veterans' healthcare while we transition, because people need relief now.

4. Right now, data centers threaten our communities through massive water use, rising electricity costs, and environmental damage, while corporations take tax breaks and leave locals with the consequences. I will not allow this to become the status quo in Montana. Data centers are coming. The question is whether we make them respect our resources and serve Montanans, or allow Montanans to be exploited. First, I will mandate closed-loop water systems for all data centers, no exceptions. New open-loop systems will be banned, and existing ones must transition and fund cleanup. Second, I will end citizen-funded subsidies. Companies must build at least 115% of their own energy capacity so Montanans are not paying higher power bills. Third, I will introduce the Automated Infrastructure Tax Act to ensure these facilities pay back into local infrastructure, education, and workforce development.

5. Montana's tribal nations deserve real representation that respects sovereignty and delivers results. MT-02 is home to the majority of our tribal nations, yet too often they have been treated as an afterthought. That is unacceptable. Since the start of my campaign, I have driven over 2,800 miles visiting tribal communities. Those were not campaign stops, they were listening sessions. I believe no one understands what a community needs better than the people who live there. My job is to listen, partner with tribal governments, and deliver what they are asking for. I will support legislation to expand tribal healthcare, job training, and mental health services, improve access to VA care for Native veterans, and ensure federal policy respects sovereignty and tells the truth about our shared history.



Patrick McCracken (Lib)



Age: 48

Location: Columbia Falls

Education: Montana State University, Bachelor of Science, Earth Sciences

Occupation: Precious Metals & Rare Coin brokerage

Contact information: mc-crackenformontana.com,

patrick@mccrackenformontana.com, 406-260-7576

1. The same squeeze hollowing out the American middle class is hollowing out Montana agriculture. The generations before us didn't build this state just so our way of life could be lost to monopolies who control both sides of the market. Farmers and ranchers are surrounded by price-fixing



THOM BRIDGE, INDEPENDENT RECORD

A voter drops her ballot at the Lewis and Clark County Elections Office in Helena on Sept. 9.

corporate monopolies. When the middle breaks, a tech billionaire waits to buy the land. Congress can fix this. I will bring, support, sponsor, and co-sponsor:

- COOL so consumers can choose American product.
- Cash trade mandates for real price discovery.
- The PRIME Act to open local Montana markets without the Big Four bottleneck.
- Strong enforcement of the Packers & Stockyards Act.

Congress needs to open the market! Consumers want choice and producers can fulfill that directly. If we want Montana Agriculture to thrive, their Rep needs to do more than pose for pictures.

2. Wages are too low to start a family and land prices are too high to start a farm. The work won't wait. If expanding the foreign ag worker program keeps our farms and ranches operating, I'll support it. But be honest: this is a symptom, not a solution. When four meatpackers control the market and set the price, rancher margins collapse. When margins collapse, producers can't pay wages that keep Montanans home. When the kids leave, you need workers from somewhere else. Every labor shortage in agriculture traces back to the same consolidation

and monopoly pricing that has hollowed out rural economies for forty years. Fix the underlying economics – restore competitive markets, enforce antitrust law, and pass COOL so Montana product commands a premium – and operations can pay wages that attract Montana workers and keep the next generation on the land. Until then, the Stockgrowers are right, the work needs to get done. Unlike the floor of the House, where nothing gets done at all.

3. Healthcare is a problem nationwide, but it's brutal here. Nine Montana counties have no doctor at all. This isn't a market failure – there is no market. Government capped the supply of doctors, insurance giants and hospital systems control access, and Washington banned Medicare from negotiating drug prices for decades. Then they act shocked when rural hospitals close and doctors won't come here. I'll protect Medicaid expansion. It's the only thing keeping many rural Montana hospitals open right now, and I won't let ideology close a hospital while people still need it. But protection isn't a plan. Real access means opening the market: make telehealth permanent; let doctors bill patients directly and cut the middleman; price transparency on every bill; slash licensing barriers so providers

can practice where they're needed; simplify loan forgiveness.

Get government out of the way and let doctors be doctors. Only then will Montana kids who want to practice medicine come home.

4. I do not support data centers in Montana. That doesn't mean they won't come. They will. When they do, they should pay full market rates. The AI and tech industry is circling our cheap energy, cold water, and captive monopoly utility like wolves on a newborn elk calf. The resource war is here!

Northwestern Energy (NWE) is negotiating deals that would more than double our electricity demand. After the Montana Power fiasco, NWE now earns a guaranteed rate of return on every new asset they build. The more power they sell to data centers, the bigger their guaranteed profits. Contracts are sealed. Water commitments are secret. The Public Service Commission says you don't get to see the terms. A monopoly you have no choice but to pay is reshaping Montana's grid, water, and cost of living for a generation – while the regulators hide the details. That's not regulation. That's collaboration. Montana is not Silicon Valley. Our water, our power, and our land belong to Montanans first.

5. I'll start by asking Jonathan Windy Boy when I see him and we can go from there. I'm a white guy. I don't pretend to understand the lived experience on the reservation. But I have my own lived experience under the same sky. I know what keeping your word looks like, and right now treaty obligations are being quietly lumped in with unrelated programs so they can be cut. That's not an accident.

Tribes face every problem we all face – housing, healthcare, crime, jobs – only worse. Five reservations in MT-02. Real people, real problems, and nobody in Washington doing a damn thing about it. We spend billions defending ancient land claims on the other side of the world while the Little Shell can't get the 200 acres it's owed. Native women are murdered at ten times the national average. Killers walk free in the tribal-state-federal jurisdictional mess. Cartels exploit those same gaps. Tribal sovereignty is treaty law. I won't play along with anyone trying to break it.



Dr. Michael D. Eisenhower Colonel (Retired), Medical Corps, United States Army (Ind)



Age: 62

Location: Great Falls

Education: Undergraduate: University of Nebraska-Lincoln; BS-Life Sciences, BA-Chemistry, Minor-Music, 1982-1986 Medical School (Doctor of Medicine – MD): Georgetown University School of Medicine, Washington, D.C., 1986-1990. Masters of Business Administration (MBA) with Certificate in Healthcare Administration: University of Texas-Dallas, Richardson, TX, 2014-2015. Post-Graduate Medical Training: i. Residency: Internal Medicine, Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Washington, D.C., 1990-1993. ii. Fellowship: Cardiovascular Medicine, Madigan Army Medical Center, Fort Lewis/Tacoma, WA, 1994-1997. iii. Fellowship: Interventional Cardiology, St. Louis University School of Medicine, St. Louis, MO, 1999-2000.

Occupation: Doctor of Medicine; Cardiovascular Medicine (Board Certified, 1997 to present), and Interventional Cardiology (Board Certified, 2000 to present). Military Service Veteran; Retired Medical Corps Officer, with 24+ years length of Active-Duty Service, United States Army. Father; My son is a Mechanical and Structural Engineer, and lives and works in Great Falls.

Contact information: website: www.eisenhowerforcongress.com, info@eisenhowerforcongress.com, 406-868-2277, 1720 10th Ave S, Ste 4, PMB #416, Great Falls, MT 59405

1. Family farms and ranches underpin our regional economy, national security, and way of life in Montana. Without positive action, more farmers and ranchers will go bankrupt or simply stop producing (at a loss). Our young people will not go into agriculture; it will take decades to repair our rural economies.

Problems:

- Input costs; the War in Iran has only compounded cost increases in both fuel and fertilizer.

- Output prices are down.

- Tariffs.

- Declining international market share.

Solutions:

- o Codify a Right to Repair.

- o Conventional short-term bailouts do not benefit the Farmer substantially; they pass through to multinational corporations (input suppliers). We need long-term solutions – not a one-time patch.

- o The sale of agricultural assets to foreign entities or multinational corporations must be curtailed; strengthen AFIDA.

- o Anti-trust legislation and legal enforcement for input suppliers.

- o Congress must constitutionally take back control over tariffs and trade policy.

2. YES. Although I strongly believe that we need to enforce our immigration laws, expanding pathways for foreign-born agricultural workers in Montana reflects a simple reality: there aren't enough available local workers to meet demand, and the consequences are already affecting the state's economy and food production. But this isn't just about immigration—it's about keeping Montana's agricultural system functioning in the face of a shrinking workforce. Without those workers, the state risks reduced production, rural economic strain, and long-term damage to a key industry. Because of this, the H-2A temporary agricultural visa is essential. It seasonally complements the domestic workforce – it does not replace it.

There are balancing opinions: Opposition is rooted in the belief that Montana should focus on raising job quality, rebuilding its local workforce, and investing in long-term solutions rather than increasing reliance on temporary foreign labor to address immediate shortages.

3. Montana's critical-access and rural healthcare system must be maintained. As a Cardiologist, I know that delays of even an hour in the care for emergencies such as a heart attack or stroke can mean the difference between life and death. Our current system is broken; our country spends an unsustainable 20% of our economy on healthcare. The One Big Beautiful Bill (OBBB) canceled Medicaid support and eliminated subsidies. About 2/3 of Montana Medicaid recipients reside in rural areas; this threatens the ability for our 47 rural

health facilities to remain financially viable or to maintain current service levels. An Independent Representative can think out of the box in ways that are not constrained by party dogma. Any effort must first protect the ability to see the doctor of your choice, and must retain coverage for preexisting conditions. Government-run healthcare is not the answer. Above all else, I will fight hard to protect rural healthcare in Montana, because I know what it does.

4. Data centers may generate economic development, but never at the expense of Montana's natural resources and communities. We must protect our health, happiness and way of life that makes our State both unique and enjoyable. I support responsible growth that protects our water and energy systems, and also protects the ability for each potentially affected community to decide for themselves:

- New data centers must be required to use closed-loop cooling systems to eliminate water consumption

- Development should only move forward when there is excess power capacity, ensuring that data centers do not compete with residents or local industries for electricity (no rate increases)

- Use Montana labor to build Montana facilities

- Local control; no federal or state mandate

Potential property tax levies and other financial incentives may generate steady income for local government and schools, but Montana's resources are not unlimited and must be preserved for our children's future.

5. Effective engagement requires more than occasional outreach—it calls for consistent, respectful, government-to-government relationships and a clear commitment to listening and follow-through:

- Meaningful conversation; not just during campaign season but an ongoing dialogue with tribal leaders, councils, and community members

- Real-life representation; adopt concerns about housing, education, infrastructure, economic development, costs of living, and the lack of culturally competent services

- Tribal sovereignty; respect each tribe's authority to govern its own affairs. I will always uphold treaty obligations, work to protect land and water rights, and support law enforcement

- Long-term relationships matter; trust is earned and not given

- Access to care; I will fight for the Indian Health Service as an integral part of my larger effort to protect rural healthcare in Montana

In short, it's about partnership, respect, and sustained engagement – not just representation from afar.

LAPRAIM FOR MONTANA



Montanans are feeling the squeeze.

Property taxes, housing market, and lack of industry...people are hungry for the good old days. We want it back, and we want it back fast.

Steve's Key Issues:

- **Taxes**

Property taxes, income taxes... plain and simple, they are all too high.

- **Industry**

It's time to open the flood gates and create more high-paying jobs and cut red tape.

- **Government Spending**

It's out of control. We need a balanced budget.

- **Education**

Montanans want more School Choice – Every child deserves their perfect educational fit. Families' money should go where their child goes to school. We want men out of girls' sports, period, end of story.

Vote for Steve LaPram for Senate District 42

Paid for by LaPram for Montana, Josh Clement Treasurer, 940 Denali Rd, Helena, MT 59602 – Republican.



Western Congressional District

Note: One candidate for Western Congressional District, Nick Sheedy (Lib), did not participate in this questionnaire.

Ryan Busse (Dem)



Age: 56

Location: Kalispell (have lived in the Flathead for 31 years)

Education: Graduated Rural Public High School – Obtained Bach. Degree In History/Political Sci

Occupation: Former Firearms Exec, Current Communications Consultant

Contact information: www.busseformontana.com

1. All Americans own our public lands, but right now corporate interests have too much influence over how we manage them, and this is threatening outdoor recreation for all of us. For more than a century, generations of citizens, often led by Montanans like Lee Metcalf and Pat Williams, have worked to establish critical regulatory safeguards that balance the interests of development and ensure the immense power of large corporations does not usurp the interests of millions of American citizens, including all Native Americans, and I am dedicated to helping reestablish those safeguards. “Fast Track” proposals currently being pushed by Republicans in places that aim to ignore our laws and threaten rivers, such as the Sheep Creek mine in the Bitterroot, are dangerously wrong, and I am devoted to fighting to ensure that industry is held to the standards set forth in our laws.

2. Instead of spending hundreds of billions of dollars on foreign wars and an out-of-control ICE budget, we should be expanding federal programs that help Montanans purchase homes. These programs should include expanded down payment assistance for first-time home buyers. We should also institute a federally guaranteed low-interest program for homebuyers. I am also in favor of exploring other federal programs that provide rental assistance and expand the use of modular homes and equity-sharing programs. We should be pushing a multitude of buttons and developing new ones with the urgency this situation demands.

3. No. The unchecked growth and deployment of executive power is dangerous for our country. Not only should the War Powers Resolution be enforced, but Congress must also step up and act on a myriad of other responsibilities. The current sycophants in Congress have done far too little to push back on disas-

trous tariffs that are driving up costs and killing Western Montana businesses. The current majority in Congress refuses to hold hundreds of powerful men who trafficked and abused young girls criminally accountable. Congress also refuses to exercise oversight over, or limit funding for, poorly trained masked ICE agents who have killed American citizens. These wars are costing billions of dollars per day and driving up fuel prices, even as the same Congress says we don’t have money for healthcare and housing in this country. It’s past time for Congress to grow a spine and do its job.

4. Current proposals to rapidly develop data centers in Montana without a strong regulatory framework are dangerous. If development is to be considered then there must be more than empty promises about “doing it right.” We must demand those promises are in law. I am devoted to fighting to make certain that no favors are done for tech billionaires. I am devoted to ensuring that we do not risk a single gallon of water quality and that power rates for Montanans are not raised a single penny, so that the wealthiest AI companies can profit from our state. Here again, I will be a forceful advocate for the people of this state over the powerful corporate interests seeking to exploit Montana.

5. This Congress has purposely imperiled our rural hospitals by gutting Medicaid coverage and slashing ACA tax credits, both of which are dramatically reducing health coverage for rural Montanans and dangerously lowering funding for rural hospitals. And they’ve been clear about why: they needed to cut these services so that the wealthiest Americans, like Elon Musk, could receive a huge tax cut. I am proudly fighting not just to reverse these disastrous policies but to institute universal health care for all Americans. It’s time to stop letting wealthy insurance corporations rig the system and instead insist on basic decency and security for the people who make this country work. Doing this will require courage, and it will require dealing with many Democrats who have stood in the way. I’m not afraid to elbow them out of the way either. I’m committed to fighting for immediate conversion to universal healthcare, which would shore up our rural healthcare system and help all Montanans.



Christi Jacobsen (Rep)



Age: 50

Location: Helena

Education: Graduated from Capital High School in Helena, Montana. Earned a Bachelor’s degree in Political Science, (BA) from Carroll College in 1997. Earned a Master’s degree in Public

Administration (MPA) from the University of Montana in 2000.

Occupation: Montana Secretary of State

Contact information: christijacobsen.com

1. Montana’s outdoor economy isn’t separate from our way of life – it is our way of life. My vision is to protect the lands, waters, and access that define Montana, while ensuring our communities can grow in a way that is responsible and benefits the people who actually live here. That means defending public access, supporting responsible forest and land management, and pushing back on federal overreach that limits Montana’s ability to manage its own resources. It also means recognizing that conservation and economic growth are not mutually exclusive – they go hand in hand when done right. In my time as Secretary of State, I’ve worked to cut red tape, implement efficiencies, and help create an environment where small businesses and entrepreneurs can thrive – including those tied directly to tourism, outdoor recreation, and local economies. That same approach applies here.

2. Congress absolutely has a responsibility to address the federal policies that are making the problem worse. My approach starts with getting Washington out of the way where it’s driving up costs – burdensome regulations, delays in permitting, and so forth. We need to expand access to land where appropriate, streamline federal processes, and ensure that Montana communities have the flexibility to grow without unnecessary federal interference. At the same time, Congress can play a constructive role by supporting infrastructure investments that make housing development possible and by encouraging policies that increase supply rather than artificially inflating demand. In my role as Secretary of State, I’ve worked to cut red tape and make it easier for businesses to operate and grow in Montana, and that same mindset applies to housing. We should be empowering builders, supporting workforce housing, and ensuring that growth benefits Montanans.

3. I support President Trump’s recent military actions in Iran and Venezuela because they are rooted in a simple principle: protecting American lives, defending our allies, and deterring regimes that threaten American interests. Peace is always the goal, but peace is achieved through strength – and when adversaries test the United States, we must be willing to act decisively. At the same time, Congress has an important constitutional role in authorizing and overseeing military force. I would support efforts to ensure that any sustained or expanded military engagement is clearly defined, strategically grounded, and authorized consistent with the law. My position is straightforward: strong leadership abroad, peace through strength, and adherence to our Constitution.

4. Data centers bring investment, good jobs, and long-term revenue, but they must

respect Montana’s resources and communities. I support responsible development that balances growth with protections for water, energy, and land. Congress should back infrastructure and energy solutions that allow projects to succeed while giving Montana the flexibility to set standards that safeguard local resources. Growth should work for Montanans, not against them.

5. I believe Montanans who rely on Medicaid deserve stable, reliable access to care. If elected, I would work to protect funding for the program and ensure state flexibility to administer it efficiently. That said, I believe reforms with responsible privatization are necessary to make the system viable long-term. Insolvency would mean losing it altogether.



Kimberly A Persico (Ind)



Age: 57

Location: Hot Springs

Education: I have a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry from the University of WI-River Falls.

Occupation: Self employed. I have a consulting business and rental property.

Contact information: www.keepingamericaspromise.com, keepingamericaspromise@gmail.com.

1. Protecting our public lands is an important issue for us in Montana. I will never support selling our public lands. I also do not support rescinding the roadless rule or repealing the Wilderness Study Area protections. With that being said, I do fully support the multi-use aspect of our public lands. I support responsibly developed Sustainable Yield Units to support the timber industry. I support responsibly developed mining projects that do not contaminate sensitive wetland/water environments or destroy indigenous sacred sights. I support classifying bison as livestock and letting them graze on our public lands. I support fully funding our National Parks, Monuments and lands. The economic impact of our public lands is enormous as must be carefully preserved for ourselves and future generations.

2. Congress can do many things to help bring down the cost of housing. It can enact tax credits for entry-level home construction and conversion of unused offices and retail space into housing. Infrastructure investment in roads, water and sewage systems for new and existing affordable communities will bring down prices. Investing in research into new construction technologies like 3D-printed housing will enable efficient, climate-resilient communities to be built quickly and relatively inexpensively. Congress can prohibit corporations from buying up single family homes for rental properties. It can also encourage cit-

whether you develop it. I'll push for permitting reform that moves faster while requiring rigorous siting review so we're not trading wild-life corridors and watersheds for short-term growth. The outdoor economy and responsible development aren't in conflict but only if we're honest about the tradeoffs and make smart decisions before permits are issued, not after.

2. Montana's housing crisis is real and it's hitting working families, veterans, seniors, and young people hardest. Congress has direct tools to fix this — and I intend to use them.

I support expanding the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, which is the single most effective federal tool for spurring affordable construction, and pairing it with a state-level match incentive to leverage more Montana investment. I support funding rural housing programs through USDA so that small towns aren't left out of the solution. I'll fight for workforce housing investment in communities where teachers, nurses, and first responders can't afford to live near where they work. And I support zoning reform incentives that reward communities for reducing barriers to building, not mandates, but real financial incentives for states and localities that act.

3. I graduated from West Point, flew Blackhawks and served in Iraq. At West Point, we are built upon the ideals of Duty, Honor, Country. Attacking a nation, unprovoked, murdering their leadership, with no strategy for what happens next is about the most repulsive use of our service members and military capabilities. When I was a freshman at West Point, my Team Leader was also from Montana. He died in Iraq. Montana's sons and daughters are not pawns for a damn smoke & mirror game to protect the President's reputation. I've lived and served in these countries after an invasion. It takes decades for the local population to engage in standing up a new government. Forever wars truly do last forever. Venezuela was by choice. Iran is by choice. We did this to ourselves. Montanans that voted for Trump were promised that he was the peace candidate. No more wars! He lied to everyone. And Montanans hate being lied to — regardless of party.

4. Montana has real assets that make it attractive for data center development, and AI will only accelerate that demand. I've worked as an engineer inspecting coal and gas plants across the country, so I understand firsthand how our grid operates and what it takes to expand it sustainably. That context shapes how I think about this: data centers can mean jobs and tax revenue, but Montanans need straight answers on water demands, actual net job creation, and whether local communities are getting a fair deal. I'll push for transparency in those negotiations, oppose federal incentives that trade away agricultural water rights or rural infrastructure, and fight for the grid investments needed to meet future energy demand responsibly.

5. I support moving toward universal coverage, and I'll be honest with Montana voters about what that means practically. In the near term, my priorities are clear: roll back Trump's Medicaid cuts that are stripping coverage from tens of thousands of Montanans, restore and permanently extend the enhanced ACA premium tax credits that expired at the start of 2026 and have already caused premiums to more than double for families buying coverage on their own, cut prescription drug costs by extending the \$35 insulin cap beyond Medicare to every Montanan with diabetes and empowering Medicare to negotiate prices on more drugs. We must protect rural hospitals from closure because in Montana, losing your hospital doesn't mean driving to a better one, it means driving an hour to the nearest emergency room. The goal is simple: no Montanan should go bankrupt getting sick, and no rural community should lose its only hospital. I'll work with anyone, Republican or Democrat, to get there.



Aaron Flint (Rep)



Age: 46
Location: Kalispell
Education: Local broadcaster and retired Lt. Colonel U.S. Army Reserves and Montana National Guard
Occupation: Bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Montana

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

1. There are places where it's appropriate to mine and places where it's not. Striking the balance and managing public lands in accordance with proper multiple use of public lands is important to maintaining our economy and our way of life. Outdoor recreation and tourism has taken off as an economic engine for Western Montana. It may surprise some, but energy and mineral extraction is the largest funding source for conservation projects on federal lands; the Land and Water Conservation Fund and Great American Outdoors Act are funded almost exclusively through oil and gas receipts. If we shut down extraction, like the radical left wants, funding for LWCF/GAOA projects like in Yellowstone, the Flathead National Forest, and state parks vanishes. I will always fight for public access to public lands and make sure that shady foreign companies aren't allowed to squander our resources and pollute our waters.

2. Jessica and I get it, even with my G.I. Bill we are locked into a rental while we wait for interest rates to come down. I understand why so many people are moving their families from high-tax and ultra-regulation states in favor of Montana values. But we need to make sure the Montana dream is affordable.

The increased population is one reason for higher home prices. But one of the biggest ways to address this is by cutting the red tape that adds costs and lengthens timelines. We also need to focus on producing building materials here at home. A strong logging industry lowers costs and keeps money in our local economy. Finally, we need more skilled workers. Investing in apprenticeships and trade training will help build more homes and create good paying jobs at the same time. The bottom line is that we need high wage job opportunities so our kids can afford to stay here. We need an economy that allows Montanans to make a life in Montana.

3. Everyone is sick of forever wars. I was deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan, and Africa. I know what it means to be stuck in a nation building quagmire with no clear end in sight. We owe it to the men and women who serve to be clear about our mission and not drag them into endless conflicts that cost lives and waste your tax dollars. That being said, the Department of War and the President have existing congressional authorities to conduct limited scope engagements for a short period of time. I believe the commander in chief must have that ability. We live in a dangerous world, and hesitation can cost lives. Regarding the war in Iran and Venezuela, President Trump has taken out terrorists who were responsible for the deaths of Americans either through narco-terrorism or by being the number one state sponsor of terrorism in the world. These limited scope engagements appear to be at- or nearing an end which I welcome.

4. I do not support data centers coming into Montana that jack up electricity rates, use all our water, and foul our Montana way of life. Our national security hinges on maintaining digital and cyber dominance over China, Russia and other adversaries. Unfortunately that requires an incredible amount of processing power and behind that are data centers. When local governments are assessing data centers, the two things to keep in mind are: 1. We cannot let China win the chip and data war, and 2. We cannot allow data centers to take advantage of Montana. If Butte or the Crow or whomever has a proposal for a data center, my position is it needs to be done right. They need to produce their own power and, even better, add into the grid and help lower costs for consumers. They should be reliant on their own water, some sites have closed circuits that recycle the same water over and over again and do not rely on rivers and lakes. And they have to use good Montana trade workers.

5. I fully support people who rightly qualify for Medicaid to receive the benefits. However, the rampant fraud and abuse of our Medicaid system needs to end. Billions of dollars in taxpayer-funded programs cannot continue to go to illegal aliens and so-

called "migrants" who have been siphoning away resources from important life-saving programs, while the Montanans who pay into the system are struggling to make ends meet. We have seen exactly how disastrous the Medicaid fraud has become in blue cities like Minneapolis, and it is unfair to our fixed-income and working families to let it continue.



Sam Forstag (Dem)



Age: 31
Location: Missoula
Education: University of Montana, degree in Political Science
Occupation: Smokejumper and union leader until resigning to run this campaign

Contact information: www.samformontana.com

1. Public lands make our lives richer by providing a place to hike, ski, hunt, camp, and for a lot of us, they're also the places we work. Whether it's public servants building trails and fighting fires, guides and outfitters working in tourism, or loggers and mill workers harvesting the timber that pays for our public schools and comprises our homes. Public lands can do all of these things when we act as good stewards. In Congress, I'll fight to reinvest in our public lands, and in public service. Not just to fill the vacancies left from this administration's ongoing attacks, but to significantly expand our investments in public lands staff and active forest management so we can finally work our way out of this constant state of crisis response. I'll fight to expand USDA grants to help modernize and revitalize local mills, and to create clear, workable timelines for processing timber sales challenges to make sure we're engaging in the sort of responsible timber harvest we need.

2. Congress needs to step up and make sure that Americans can meet basic needs like housing. Our representatives have failed to do that in recent years. I'll fight to change that and finally tackle the housing crisis with the urgency it deserves. Here's how:

Significant federal investments to build affordable housing through programs like CDBG, community land trusts, and the first-time home-buyer tax credit, and federal incentives to help build affordable rental units in the places we need them. End corporate home ownership by banning the purchase of residential property by hedge funds and private equity firms and eliminating tax breaks for institutional investors and corporations. Incentivize zoning reforms in places where outdated restrictions are standing in the way of building the housing working people need.

Expand investments in apprenticeships and trade school opportunities to increase the number of good union job opportunities in construction and the trades.

3. No. I don't support the decision to drag our country into more endless wars, and I'll fight against it in Congress. The Constitution vests the power to declare war with Congress, not the President. Yet time and again, we end up spending billions and sacrificing American lives in wars that our representatives are too cowardly to take a vote on, much less stop. I'm tired of our government telling us they can afford war while they cut public services to pay for it. I'd vote against authorizing military action in Iran and Venezuela, and against these outrageous requests to spend hundreds of billions on new wars with cuts to healthcare, food assistance, and education to pay for it. That's a disgusting misuse of our resources, and it's another example of what happens when we have a government of the rich, for the rich. Montanans are tired of paying for needless wars by cutting public services, and I'll fight to stop that tradeoff in Congress.

4. The unregulated development of AI is one of the biggest existential threats we face as a country, and we need Congress to create oversight and requirements now. I'll fight for federal legislation to create three foundational requirements for the building of any new data centers: Providing their own power: AI companies should be required to pay for construction of their own power sources so all of us aren't left footing the bill. Water efficiency: Our water is too important to let corporations waste in the name of profit. We should require data centers to use efficient air-cooling systems. Union labor: If they want to build here, they better do it with union labor. Just as importantly, we urgently need public oversight and regulation of AI companies and the technology they're building. AI has immense potential to concentrate power in the hands of the few, and we cannot just leave that to a few unelected corporate leaders. I'll fight in Congress to act on this before it's too late.

5. Our healthcare system is fundamentally broken. The current system leaves so many of us paying more every year for health insurance that keeps getting worse while insurance corporations rake in more profits. Let's change that. In Congress, I'll fight not just to repeal the Medicaid cuts in the BBB, but to increase our investments in Medicaid. We should increase reimbursement rates so that rural hospitals aren't going broke serving patients and expand the services that are eligible for Medicaid reimbursement so that things like case management and crisis response can be expanded across the state to give everyone access. I'll fight to give every American the choice of joining Medicare, along with an increase and renewal of ACA

subsidies to make that free healthcare for every working-class person in this country. Nobody should go broke to afford healthcare, and we shouldn't force people into private insurance companies' broken system any longer.



Ray Curtis (Rep)

Age: 65

Location: Turah

Education: Both BA and Master's in US Constitutional history from the University of Montana

Occupation: semi-retired American Government Teacher

Contact information: hireray4mt.com, hireray4mt@gmail.com

1. I recall learning forty years ago from K Ross Toole that Montana has what other places have lost: beautiful, clean space with a quality of life. To keep "the quiet beauty of our state" development must be responsible and with the long-term consequences considered. The states constitution requires we maintain a clean and healthful environment. Additionally, Montana communities ought to have a say in developing in a way acceptable to them. I think representatives need to listen to the people who live here. Keep in mind, this is more for future generations than the present ones. Too many times, I fear that we have neglected what our young people are going to inherit from us for short term gain. We absolutely do not want to lose what has been lost elsewhere and "turn our blessing into a curse." I firmly believe we can achieve a balance between conservation and development by working together and remembering what is special about this place we call home.

2. It has become even more expensive here because Montana has been discovered as a desirable place to live. It is getting harder and harder for someone from here to stay here. Homeownership is out of reach for many Montanans. The average age of a first-time homebuyer in the U.S. is now 40 years old, which is the oldest on record. Additionally, the median age of all homebuyers is now 59 years. One possible solution to bring down home prices and make ownership more feasible might be to manipulate supply through taxes. Taxes is an unpopular word, but they are used to manipulate all kinds of behavior such as charitable giving, or sin-taxes on alcohol and tobacco. Other nations tax gasoline at a much higher rate to encourage the use of more fuel-efficient cars. Perhaps taxes could be used to limit the number of homes and properties a person can accumulate. Discouraging the purchase of home after home, so others can have an affordable place to live,

seems like a desirable goal.

3. The US Constitution grants Congress the expressed power to declare war. In the cases of Iran and Venezuela it is clear why the Framers did this, so that one individual could not unilaterally take our nation to war, especially one which is not a national emergency. The Framers wanted to ensure our presidents did not have the power of kings. The War Powers Resolution of 1973 was only passed because past presidents tried to abuse their authority. Congress can, and should, use the "power of the purse" to pull funding and leverage their constitutional authority. The Resolution in question does not need to be discarded, but instead utilized, and quickly. Congress has ceded its exclusive constitutional powers too frequently in the past year. Our country desperately needs representatives who are devoted to their constitutional duties and the people they serve, rather than automatically falling in line with the president.

4. This issue is being discussed in my community right now! Development of data centers is not impossible but, thankfully, local political leaders considered first the people most impacted, thus requiring new data centers to produce their own NEW energy so residential consumers won't see their rates go up as a result. Those data centers are also forbidden from being built near residential areas and thus negatively impact the people who live nearby. Montana has a lot

of open space for clean development. A key question is how much water might be available? This question can't be flatly answered for all areas; it has to be looked at from a local perspective and current environmental perspective. Data centers require review, they might simply not have what they need because of existing residential, agricultural, environmental, and recreational needs. For example, is predicted that stream runoff this year will be a fraction of normal. Water is limited resource.

5. It disturbs me that the "big, beautiful bill" adds trillions to our \$39 trillion national debt, a debt we are passing on to future generations to take care of. It only took five months to add the last trillion whereas it took 200 years to add the first. Nearly \$1 trillion now is going to be spent on the military, three times as much as what China spends. Like President Eisenhower, I believe out of control military spending takes away from "promoting the general welfare" of we the people. I believe one of the fundamental purposes of government is to help people who need help, plain and simple, without contemplating anything else about them except that they are humans who need help. Montanans are pretty good about that. We've all helped push another person's car out of a snowy ditch a time or two. I'd like to bring this ethos of Montanans to congress and apply the "All men are created equal" mentality

READY TO LEAD.

ERIN FARRIS-OLSEN
FOR SENATE DISTRICT 41

PAID FOR BY ERIN FARRIS-OLSEN FOR SD 41 - D P.O. BOX 141, HELENA MT 59624

at a larger scale. We ought to, and we can, make people's lives better. Everyone's.



Albert D. Olszewski MD (Rep)



Age: 63
Location: Kalispell
Education: Charles M Russell high school, Great Falls MT, Carroll College-Helena MT, University of Washington Medical School, USAF Wilford Hall Medical Center for Surgical internship and

Orthopedic Surgical residency, University of Texas Health Science Center for Sports Medicine/Total Joint fellowship.

Occupation: Independent orthopedic surgeon

Contact information: alformontana.com

1. I believe in balanced use of all our public lands. Western Montana has bountiful federal lands that can sustain active use for multiple use recreation, active forest management, and resource development. We will continue to protect our wilderness areas. Those wilderness study areas that have failed to be designated wilderness needs to be returned to multiple use lands. Federal forests and mineral deposits are part of Montana's treasure. They need to be harvested and mined in a 21st century sustainable and environmentally safe way to create high paying jobs for Montanans, and provide royalties to Western Montana counties to pay their fair share in lieu of property taxes to support roads, public school and infrastructure.

2. Western Montana is expensive. Congress can help make Montana more affordable in two ways. Employ Montanans through opening our federal lands to natural resource development. Timber and mining jobs provide high paying salaries that make it affordable to pay a house mortgage. Robust timber harvesting results in high supply of building materials which lowers their cost. The second way Congress can help Montanans is through inexpensive energy. Cheap energy is the secret to making Montana affordable. It affects the cost of food prices, transportation, heating in the winter, and the cost of building homes. These two mechanisms, in conjunction with State and local efforts will help address affordability in Western Montana.

3. I do not like the war in Iran and I support our President in his decision of military action in Iran and Venezuela. I believe the President has more information than the public concerning the Iranian and Venezuela threats to the American people. Fighting foreign wars fails my Montana First Agenda by driving up the costs of energy, food, and medicines. I believe that Congress does need to debate a 21st century vision of clawing back their constitutional powers that have



THOM BRIDGE, INDEPENDENT RECORD

The Montana Senate debates legislation on Jan. 22 in the state Capitol.

been eroded or forfeited to the executive branch. That includes the 1973 War Powers Act. The timing of this debate and a vote to rescind or modify the 1973 War Powers Act is when our country is not involved in major military actions, not during them. Based on the start of the Iranian war as 02/28/2026, Congress will need to authorize approval of continued war authority by 04/29/2026, or our President will have to withdraw from our military engagement with Iran per the 1973 War Powers Act.

4. I do not support the development of Artificial Intelligence Data Centers in Western Montana. The energy consumption and water use will required by these projects will hurt Montanans by driving up the cost of electricity, and water usage. In addition artificial intelligence programs will put Montanans who work in high paying white collar occupations out of a job. The elimination of these jobs will make Montana unaffordable to many families. AI data centers in Western Montana are more likely to hurt Montana families than to help them. This is one issue I hope we can all say, No to data center development in Montana.

5. I support the main provisions of the One Big Beautiful Act and their impact on Medicaid Expansion. The first key change to Medicaid Expansion is work requirements. The second key change is required eligibility verification every six months. The third key change is requiring increased fees for people who receive medicaid expansion, who make more money than the federal poverty level. We have these requirements in our Montana laws already. As a State Senator in the 2019 legislature, I voted for these provisions and they passed the House, senate and the Governor.



HOUSE DISTRICT 17

Note: Two other candidates for HD 17, Justin Cleveland (Rep) and Michael Fasbender (Rep), did not participate in this questionnaire.

Susan Good Geise (Rep)



Age: 76
Location: Augusta
Education: BA Smith College Northampton, MA
Occupation: Paraprofessional Teacher
Contact information: Msusangood@montana.com, GeiseforHD17,

1. Tax increases should require a supermajority to pass. These decisions affect families' abilities to thrive and so should be subject to a higher bar than other decisions.

2. The legislature should not pass laws that their own lawyers tell them are unconstitutional. Over the last two years, Montana has wasted millions of taxpayer dollars to defend laws that were unconstitutional from the start.

Cross train current employees instead of hiring new workers. Salary commensurate with additional duties are still much less than new employees.

3. A great start that needs refining that prioritizes Montana residents. It continues to be a work in progress.

4. Yes. Grizzlies have been undercounted for many years. Our ranchers are already faced with significant challenges.

Cattle are sold by the pound so when they are harassed or threatened the stresses cause

them to gain less weight that is reflected in the sales price. Both wolves and grizzlies cause the stress.

5. The public is not ready for one.



HOUSE DISTRICT 70

Note: One candidate for HD 70, Abigail Thomas (Dem), did not participate in this questionnaire



Kobi Craddock (Dem)



Age: 28
Location: Ramsay
Education: Some college, 5 year Plumbing Apprenticeship
Occupation: Journeyman Plumber
Contact information: kobicraddock@gmail.com

1. My number one priority if elected to the Montana Legislature is making sure the people who actually live and work here come first in the decisions made in Helena. Too often, everyday Montanans are the ones paying the price for decisions made by people who are out of touch with how our communities actually live.

Whether it's supporting good-paying jobs, standing up for agriculture, or making sure rural communities aren't overlooked, I believe Montana policy should be shaped by the people who call this state home. The folks paying the bills, raising families, and keeping our communities going deserve honest representation that reflects their values and their best interests.

2. Montanans understand the importance of living within a budget, and state government should be no different. If spending is going to outpace revenue by 2027, then we need to take a hard look at where government has grown and where it can be trimmed back without hurting the services people rely on.

I'd start with administrative overhead, long-vacant positions that are still funded, we should review outside consulting and contract spending in areas where agencies should already have in-house capacity, and programs that don't do enough to justify the cost. At the same time, I don't think balancing the budget should come at the expense of rural communities, working families, or the people who help keep Montana's economy going. Agriculture is still a big part of this state, and producers are already carrying enough. We need to protect schools, roads, public safety, and support for seniors and veterans. Government should focus on the basics, cut waste, and live within its means.

3. Yes, I would support revisiting Montana's property tax reforms from the 2025 session.

I think the Legislature was right to try to address how hard property taxes have hit Montana homeowners, but I don't think the final product really fixed the problem.

A lot of what happened in 2025 felt more like shifting the tax burden around than actually solving it. Some primary homeowners got relief, but that often came by putting more of the load on second homes, some rentals, and other property owners. That may help some people in the short term, but it doesn't give Montana a system that feels fair or stable in the long run. At the end of the day, Montana still needs a property tax system that is easier to understand, more predictable, and less likely to tax people out of their homes. I would absolutely support taking another look at it and working toward something fairer and more sustainable.

4. Yes, I support grizzly bear delisting, as long as it is backed by sound science and clear recovery data. In key parts of Montana, grizzlies have made a real comeback, and I believe that should be recognized. That doesn't mean conservation goes away, and it doesn't mean there should automatically be a hunting season. Any future decisions should be made carefully, with input from state biologists and the people who actually live alongside these bears. I believe Montana can protect grizzlies while also giving the people who live and work alongside them a stronger voice in how they are managed.

5. I'm open to that conversation, but I would

not support a statewide sales tax if it simply became another tax shuffle that didn't actually lower the burden on Montana residents. A sales tax could help broaden the tax revenue by bringing in more revenue from tourists and nonresidents, which might take some pressure off property taxes. At the same time, sales taxes tend to hit working families the hardest, and that's a real concern. If Montana is going to consider it, it needs to be done in a way that is fair, transparent, and actually provides long-term relief—not just shifting the burden around again.



HOUSE DISTRICT 76

Note: One candidate for HD 76, Trish Schreiber (Rep), did not participate in this questionnaire.

John S. Fitzpatrick (Rep)



pany

Age: 77
Location: Georgetown Lake in Deer Lodge County
Education: BA, University of MT; MA and Ph.D. Ohio State University
Occupation: State Legislator and co-owner of a real estate development company

Contact information: Email: John.Fitzpatrick@legmt.gov Phone: 406-459-8407 Facebook: John Fitzpatrick for HD 76 Website: fitzfor76.com

1. During the past two sessions, I took the lead in acquiring funds to up-grade Montana's Correctional system, invest in the State Hospital at Warm Springs, and fund local government infrastructure projects. That will be my principal focus in the 2027 legislature as well.

2. Reducing state general fund expenditures is very difficult because about 80% of that funding is in three program areas--education, corrections, and as matching funds for social service and income maintenance programs. At this point I do not anticipate any large reduction in state services. The Legislature has access to tools to craft a balanced budget without limiting services, most notably by adjusting budgetary inflation rates and by transferring funds from state savings accounts which were prudently created several years ago to deal with potential revenue shortfalls. For example, the Budget Stabilization Reserve Fund has a balance of over \$500 million.

3. I supported passage of HB 231 and SB 542 in the last session. Those bills provided property tax relief to over 92% of the homeowners in HD 76. I have received numerous comments of appreciation and very few complaints about the legislation. Looking forward, I would be willing to re-examine the assessment rates

established for second homes.

4. Yes. Bear populations have steadily increased and they are present throughout HD 76. In my opinion, the grizzly needs to be managed as a game animal in the future.

5. NO!!! ABSOLUTELY NO! The sales tax is very hard on middle and working class families. If a sales tax is ever to be implemented in Montana, it should be done by a vote of the people and constructed to reduce property taxes.



Shayne Morgan (Ind)



Age: 54
Location: Deer Lodge
Education: Montana Tech, Carroll College, Chemeketa Community College
Occupation: President of Montana Information Security and Maintenance Technician for Montana Fish

Wildlife & Parks Warm Springs
Contact information: www.morganformontana.com

1. My top priority, if elected, is to protect Montana's lands from outside and corporate interests. That means preserving public access, safeguarding working ranches and farms, and ensuring that local communities, not out-of-state investors, have a voice in how

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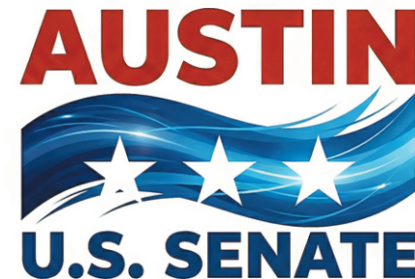
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land is used. I will support policies that keep Montana's landscapes in the hands of Montanans, protect natural resources for future generations, and maintaining the state's outdoor heritage and way of life.

2. We need to take a hard common sense approach to the budget. Is there programs we can consolidate to balance the budget? What administrative fees can we cut without cutting vital services? Is their duplicate spending in education and health services that can be re-organized. We also need to plan for more shortfalls with rising fuel costs and the rising price of goods to run Montana government efficiently and effectively.

3. Yes, I will support revisiting Montana's property tax reforms as there are some significant issues that need to be addressed on secondary homes and short-term rentals as these dwellings had sharp increases in taxation. Some of these are family homes that were purchased decades ago or inherited before Montana real estate market values increased. Many of these secondary homes have been in families for generations and they are seeing massive tax increases to lower and middle class Montanan's.

4. Yes, but only with strict guardrails in place. Returning management to the state is a necessity to effectively manage the grizzly population. State wildlife agencies need a cohesive, well-defined plan and the authority to address problem bears, including those that prey on livestock or have lost their fear of humans. Clear quotas should be established, along with a comprehensive strategy for responding to conflicts in coordination with ranchers and the public. There needs to be clear and concise communication plan among all stakeholders in grizzly management.

5. I do not support a statewide sales tax in the upcoming legislative session. With rising fuel costs and higher grocery prices, it would place an added burden on Montana families. As of March 17, 2026, Powell County alone has \$634,442.06 in outstanding property tax debt, which underscores the financial strain many residents are already facing. Adding a sales tax at this time would only increase that pressure on families, who are already stretched to their limits by rising costs.



HOUSE DISTRICT 80

Megan Lane (Dem)

Age: 46
Location: Helena
Education: BS Biology (203), BS Secondary Education – Science Broadfield (2003), MA Secondary Education – Biological Sciences (2022)



THOM BRIDGE, INDEPENDENT RECORD

The Montana House of Representative gathers on the house floor for the opening day of the 69th Montana Legislative Session at the Montana State Capitol.

Occupation: Biology Teacher (22 years), Professional Photographer (16 years)
Contact information: www.megan4montana.com, meganlane406@gmail.com, 406-431-6452, PO Box 4602 Helena 59604

1. Scott and I were both born and raised in Montana, and we've been teaching in Helena for over 20 years now. We're raising our three kids in this world that's increasingly unstable and unaffordable, where attacks on public education and public lands are threatening the very foundation of our communities. So, my number one priority will be making sure that regular Montanans have someone fighting for them. Fighting for public education, fighting for public lands, fighting for affordable housing, fighting for accessible healthcare. Someone with a deep background in public education and science, and a deep love for Montana and her people. Bottom line: life in Montana should not be out of reach for average, hardworking people, and cuts to our public lands and public schools should not be funding tax cuts for the wealthy!

2. First, we must ensure that the wealthiest Montanans pay their fair share of taxes. Right now, that's not happening. According to the Institution on Taxation & Economic Policy, low and mid-income households pay overall State tax rates of 8.4 – 9.5% (that's everyone making up to \$247,000). Those making more than \$574,000 only pay 6.7%. It's completely unacceptable that Montanans living paycheck-to-paycheck are paying more, while the rich just get richer. Second, we need to consider the current budget. For example, we spend more per day to keep a person incarcerated than we do to educate a child. Imagine flipping that ratio and invest-

ing in our children and communities. Mental health, housing, childcare, there are so many things that could help people thrive, thus reducing incarceration levels and spending. My focus in the 2027 Legislature will be ensuring that everyone pays their fair share, so we can fund services and programs that improve the lives of regular Montanans.

3. The explosion in house values caused by the Covid population migration has affected us all. Scott and I are raising our family on teacher salaries, so we deeply understand how expensive and out of reach things have gotten in recent years. The property tax reform passed in the 2025 session was a good start, but we need to make sure the financial relief is reaching all Montana residents, including those renting and people on fixed incomes. One important addition would be "circuit breaker" legislation, which would provide financial relief if someone's property taxes exceed a percentage of their income. This would help young families and the elderly alike, as well as Montanans who bought their home long ago and now have property taxes which have soared beyond their income level. We also need to make sure that school funding doesn't get pushed down to the local level, forcing residents to pass expensive levies simply to maintain their schools.

4. As a veteran biology teacher I've spent many years teaching students about the vital role of biodiversity in healthy ecosystems, and how the Endangered Species Act is essential to protecting that biodiversity. There's a real risk of ecosystem collapse when populations get out of balance. The crux: endangered species need our protections, but also, when a species has sufficiently recovered, it should be delisted. Crucially, delisting

must be coupled with well-defined, science-backed hunting regulations and guardrails. I'm extremely concerned that the recent, deep funding cuts to federal agencies like the US Fish and Wildlife Service, are putting the delisting progress in peril. The courts, rightfully so, won't allow delisting without adequate scientific data and sufficient regulatory mechanisms in place. No matter where you stand on the grizzly issue, we should all be concerned that capricious funding cuts are putting the health of our Montana ecosystems at risk.

5. If Montana taxation and spending remain the same, we will face a structural deficit in 2027, so there's no doubt we need more revenue. However, we've only reached this point of crisis because (as previously mentioned) the millionaires and billionaires in Montana aren't paying their fair share. This wasn't always the case. Multiple bills were passed by both the 2023 and 2025 Legislatures that slashed taxes for the wealthy. There is absolutely no way that we should increase taxes for average and low-income Montanans through a state-wide sales tax, while the wealthiest people in our state enjoy tax cuts. If elected, I will be a fierce advocate for fair and equitable taxation. With that additional revenue, there will be no need for a state-wide sales tax.



Qasim W. Abdul-Baki (Dem)

Age: 39
Location: Helena
Education: Law school graduate
Occupation: Public Defender
Contact information: qasimforhelena@gmail.com ; qasimforhelena.com



1. Affordability and housing.

2. We need to cut hand-outs to corporations and billionaires, who have had a free ride for the last six years under Gianforte and the Republican majority in the Legislature.

3. Yes. We need to ensure that the middle-class, lower-class, and retirees are not priced out of their only homes. We need to reward land lords who freeze or keep rent affordable with lower taxes. Finally, we need to ensure the wealthiest pay their fair share.

4. No. While I have seen that some government scientists claim the population would thrive, I would prefer to see more independent research to ensure we do not make a permanent mistake.

5. Absolutely not. Gas and groceries are already unaffordable. The last thing we need to do for Montana's working and retired families is add another tax. We cannot allow Republican fiscal mismanagement to be paid for by folks who are already struggling to make ends meet.



HOUSE DISTRICT 81

Benjamin Kuiper (Dem)



Age: 32

Location: Helena

Education: Bachelor's Degree in Economics (University of Montana, 2018)

Occupation: Corporate Income Tax Auditor

Contact information:

Website: www.benkuiperforlegislature.com – Facebook and Instagram: Ben Kuiper for Legislature Email: benjamin.kuiper.mt@gmail.com

1. My #1 priority will be representing my constituents who sent me there. To do that accurately, I am going door to door to hear directly from voters. Affordability concerns rise to the top. I will support affordable housing by working to increase the housing supply by cutting red tape and by collaborating with municipalities and developers to identify areas for reform. I will support good paying jobs by defending the ability of workers to organize and bargain in the workplace. I will advocate for affordable childcare by supporting tax incentives to increase the supply of childcare facilities. I will advocate for the preservation of public land access so Montanans can recreate and feed their families. I support an AI model that supplements our work rather than aiming to replace us. Montanans deserve to live comfortably on a modest wage while working 40 hours per week and we should be able to afford to raise a family and retire with dignity. I will fight to make that vision a reality.

2. I do not have a specific target for cuts going into the session, however, I believe in surgical cuts rather than blanket cuts. Completely gutting a program or agency with sweeping or percentage based cuts is not a good way to administer an effective budget. I will listen to my constituents and the experts in the room to identify the best areas for cuts. I promise that I will not balance the budget at the expense of our teachers, public employees and those who depend upon essential state services to survive.

3. Yes. There is still work to be done. The shift of the property tax burden to residential taxpayers that occurred in 2023 was not fully corrected in 2025. I would like to revisit the property tax discussion to analyze different ways in which the tax burden can be shared. I would like to look at certain centrally assessed and other corporate property tax classes within Montana's property tax scheme to identify if they received a tax cut at the expense of residential property

taxpayers. If they did receive a tax cut while all of our taxes went up, then I will fight to reverse that. Montanans should not be taxed out of their homes so corporate executives can take in more profit.

4. The decision to delist the grizzly would fall upon the federal government and federal elected officials. I do not believe that the grizzly should be delisted because they do not seem to be fully rehabilitated, but I will listen to my constituents and the scientists who have a complete understanding of the issue to determine the right path forward if the federal government delists the grizzly bear. I believe that they belong on our landscape and should be respected. I think the state government should work out a plan that allows the grizzly to thrive, but minimizes the potential conflict with humans and damage to property that comes along with sharing the landscape with our natural wildlife.

5. No. According to the studies, only 12% of potential revenues from a sales tax will be collected from out of state visitors. The vast majority of this new tax burden will fall upon the working and retired folks of this state. I cannot and will not advocate for this regressive tax scheme when the legislature has passed tax cuts favorable to the wealthy time and time again. It is time to look for ways to have the wealthy pay their fair share rather than burden regular working folks with another tax. If a sales tax passes, there is no guarantee that the property tax burden will be alleviated and I would be very surprised if the legislature as a whole would agree to offset property tax with a sales tax.



Janet Ellis (Dem)



Age: 70

Location: Helena

Education: I have a B.A. from the University of Montana, with a degree in biology. I also completed classes (from Montana State University) to be able to teach all science

classes in public schools from grades 5-12; however, that certificate has expired.

Occupation: Retired

Contact information: • Website: janetellis4mt.com • Email: janetellis4mt@gmail.com • Phone Number: 406-431-9157 • Mailing Address: P.O. Box 385, Helena, MT 59624 • Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/JanetForLegislature>

1. My number one priority is passing a Montana state budget that is balanced yet supports services provided to middle- and lower-income Montanans.

2. I will be closely watching how revenues

are coming in in the upcoming months. There are several "rainy day" funds that I would look to tapping before cutting specific programs. I'm committed to making sure that the needs of Montanans are met.

3. In 2025 the Montana Legislature addressed property tax relief for homeowners. Since then, there has been a lot of discussion on this issue. Consequently, I believe that property tax revisions will be revisited, discussed, and voted on at the 2027 Montana Legislature. My position on individual proposed reforms will be determined by what is specifically being proposed: my ultimate goal is to ensure that low- to middle-income Montanans have property taxes that they can afford. In addition, a specific issue that I think needs to be addressed at the 2027 Montana Legislature is property tax reform for those Montanans who rent their homes/apartments (130,000 Montanans) who did not receive adequate property tax relief from the 2025 session. While I would support reforms that would benefit long-term renters, I do not support reforms that benefit short-term renters.

4. Grizzly bear delisting is a federal Endangered Species Act decision and not a state decision (so the Montana Legislature is not able to make that decision). If the science of grizzly bear habitat and populations indicates that this species can be delisted, I would support that decision. If politics drive

this decision (and not science), I would oppose the decision. If bears are delisted, I would support hunting these animals, as long as hunting quotas are scientifically determined so that sustain the grizzly bear population long-term.

5. Enacting a statewide sales tax in Montana would be a step backwards on affordability—so I oppose it. Sales taxes are generally placed on goods (clothing, household and school supplies, vehicles, etc.) and services (vehicle repair, hair care, etc.) that average Montanans typically purchase. It is well documented that with this tax, middle- and lower-income Montanans would pay a higher percentage of their income in taxes than wealthy individuals. This consequence would hit those Montanans the hardest that are struggling to pay their bills, including low-income service workers, senior citizens on fixed incomes, students, and more. In addition, some people support enacting a sales tax because they believe Montana would greatly benefit by collecting sales taxes from tourists. This premise is false. In fact, Montana's legislative fiscal staff believe that if the state had a sales tax, Montanans would pay 88% of the tax and out-of-state visitors would only pay 12% of the tax.



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HOUSE DISTRICT 84

Note: Two candidates for HD 84, James Marshal (Rep) and Jamie Van Valkenburg (Dem), did not participate in this questionnaire.

Roy Caldwell (Rep)



Age: 63

Location: Helena

Education: BS, History/Engineering, U.S. Air Force Academy, 1985; MA, Space Systems Management, Webster University, 1991; Project Management Professional Certificate, Project Management Institute, 2013

Occupation: Retired

Contact information: Website: www.caldwell-forhd84.com; Email: roymthd84@gmail.com; Phone: 406-475-4184

1. Affordability is my number one issue...to cut property taxes, curb runaway state spending and expand affordable housing to ensure all Montana families have a safe and comfortable place to live.

2. I am a Project Manager by trade and certification. I would look at each department, the role it is filling in serving the citizens of this state and see where there is any waste or redundancy and see if it could be either streamlined or eliminated. Often times there are bureaucratic processes by which a simple legislative action can significantly reduce employee workloads.

3. Most homeowners I have talked to in HD 84 have benefited from the Homestead Exemption and lower property taxes for long-term rentals resulting from HB 231 and SB 542 from the 2025 legislative session. However, many people have expressed concerns regarding higher rates being assessed on second homes, short-term rentals and commercial properties. These are concerns which will need to be looked at during the 2027 legislative session.

4. Both Congressman Zinke and Downing supported a partial delisting of grizzly bears from one major habitat area, the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, in HR 281, introduced in January, 2025. (REF: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/281/text>). If the grizzly bear population, as seen by the proper federal, state and tribal authorities, sees the grizzly bear population as no longer endangered in a given population segment boundary area (REF: <https://www.fws.gov/media/proposed-lower-48-grizzly-bear-dps-boundary-overlaid-current-recovery-zones>), then I would support grizzly bear delisting in that area.

5. Support for a statewide sales tax, as a stand alone measure, does not have a great deal of support in Montana. Without significantly reducing or completely eliminating another source of state government revenue, like property or income tax, I would not support a statewide sales tax. Unfortunately, Montana already has



THOM BRIDGE, INDEPENDENT RECORD

The Montana State Capitol on Jan. 22.

a similar "sales tax" measure, "Resort and Local Option Taxes", although mostly limited to towns with populations of less than 5,500 near resort areas.



Tia Nelson (Dem)



Age: 65

Location: York

Education: Doctor of Veterinary Medicine

Occupation: Rancher/DVM

Contact information: 406-431-8898, DrTiaDVM@AOL.com

1. Institute a Wealth Tax so we can afford to take care of our infrastructure and citizens who need help.

2. It's time to tax the millionaires and billionaires. Cutting services is not acceptable.

3. Yes.

4. No. There are better ways to manage this population than hunting and/or trapping.

5. No. This is an unfair tax and harms our most vulnerable citizens.



SENATE DISTRICT 14

Eric Albus (Rep)



Age: 57

Location: Hinsdale

Education: some college

Occupation: Rancher/farmer

Contact information: albusformontana.com

1. Cutting government

spending

2. Finding non-essential programs to cut and trimming back government growth.

3. Yes I would. The 2025 session was my first year of serving in the legislature, and we provided property tax relief for a lot of folks, but sadly not all. I'd like to find a way to give all MONTANA RESIDENTS property tax relief.

4. Yes, grizzly populations are increasing and at all time highs. We are seeing a lot of grizzly bear encounters with humans and livestock that are not ending well. It is past time to delist.

5. Not at this time



Mark Wicks (Rep)



Age: 56

Location: Inverness

Education: Associate degree in Aviation technology from Lane Community College, Attended MSU Bozeman for Technology Education and Lulea University, Lulea Sweden.

Occupation: Farmer/Rancher

Contact information: www.wicks4freedom.com

1. Reducing spending and fraud, so we can reduce taxes.

2. I think if every agency trims the fat, and we eliminate the "feel good" programs that are not necessary we can create a budget that lives within our means and delivers needed services.

3. Yes

4. Absolutely! We have grizzly bears roaming as far east as Havre because of overcrowding in the mountains. We have hit all the benchmarks except in a couple of areas where the bears don't seem to want to live. There are grizzlies

denning on the prairies and raising litters of cubs, pictures of sows trailing three or four cubs through wheat fields are not uncommon. They are not endangered at all and are in fact thriving. There is absolutely no reason to not delist them.

5. No. I don't think Montanans want the government in every transaction they make, or to create a bigger tax bureaucracy. I hear some people say that a sales tax will make the tourists pay their fair share. I don't believe in passing a tax that a tourist pays for maybe a week out of the year and the rest of us pay 52 weeks out of the year is a good idea. I do believe that the current property taxes have been made to be intentionally painful in order to get Montanans to accept another form of tax.



SENATE DISTRICT 41

Dana Toole (Dem)



Age: 65

Location: Helena

Education: Bachelor's degree in history- University of Montana; Master of Social Work degree - University of Montana; Licensed Clinical Social Worker

Occupation: Montana Department of Justice Program Coordinator

Contact information: danatooleformontana.com danatooleforsd41@gmail.com

1. My top priority is taking action to address the affordability crisis threatening everyday life in Montana. Day in and day out, I hear about the challenges our friends, neighbors and community members are facing just navigating the everyday costs of living. There are real actions the Montana legislature can take. I will focus on supporting policy for employment opportunities and housing programs and ensuring that resources for food and healthcare are readily available. I look forward to continuing to hear Montanans' ideas on the best ways to put us on track towards a stronger, healthier, and more affordable future for all Montanans.

2. The 2027 Legislature has the opportunity to adopt responsible fiscal policies that will balance Montana's budget. My priority is making sure our taxpayer dollars are allocated to benefit all Montanans, and that our budget does not disproportionately benefit the wealthiest among us. For example, Montana's current system allows millions in taxpayer dollars in tax credits by Montanans who donate to private schools. At the same time state government is preparing to cut Medicaid services, critical health care, relied on by people across our State. It is time for a principle-driven review of recent legislative actions to root out policies that cost our state money but benefit only the richest among us. Good fiscal

policy is about sound fiscal principles combined with the right priorities for government. Recent legislatures have protected dollars that should prevent painful cuts to services for citizens. Let us take a look there before we cut so the budget is balanced and sustainable.

3. While going door-to-door, I hear again and again the concern about property taxes. Montanans deserve a 2027 legislature focused on tax reform that supports working families and promotes keeping people in their homes. Property tax reform is a complicated issue, and complicated issues are always worth more time and attention. Montana's tax policy is about the big picture, and generating the resources we need to support our public services. Revisiting property tax reform should go alongside reviewing the structure and fairness of income taxes, business taxes, and tax exemptions, credits, and refunds.

4. Montana's wildlife makes our state special. I grew up on a ranch close to the mountains and canyons of the Selway Bitterroot Wilderness. Bears and other wildlife encounters on the ranch, hiking, or riding my horse in the mountains were just part of ranch life. I'm grateful that we have dedicated experts that work collaboratively across communities and with state- and federal-partners to make responsible wildlife management decisions. Delisting the grizzly bear is outside the authority of Montana's legislature. I firmly believe that these decisions should continue to belong to the professionals, and always be driven by science, up-to-date

data, and backed by thorough research and collaboration.

5. I oppose a statewide sales tax. Experts agree, even if you exclude essential goods, sales taxes hit low-and middle-income folks disproportionately hard. At a time when the cost of living in our state is already out of control, the last thing we need is a new tax on top of routine expenses like vehicles, household goods, clothing, and sporting and outdoor equipment. There are better, more effective, ways to raise revenue for our state's government than to add a surcharge to Montanans every day at the cash register.



Erin Farris-Olsen (Dem)



Age: 42
Location: Helena
Education: Bachelor of Arts Environmental Studies & Communication, Carroll College (2006), Juris Doctorate University of Oregon School of Law
Occupation: Attorney and

Consultant

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1. My number one priority is passing a balanced budget that reflects Montana values: in-

vesting in public schools, protecting the services that keep communities healthy and safe, and making sure the tax burden does not keep shifting onto working families.

Part of the job is pushing the Legislature away from divisive bills and back toward work that actually helps families. I will do that the same way I always do: with kindness, energy, and a focus on common ground and results. I have worked in and around the Montana Legislature for more than a decade and I have seen divisiveness grow. Last session, as Communications Director for Senate Democrats, I watched too much of the people's work get derailed by bullying and a lack of decorum. People are done with politics as usual. They want kitchen table solutions. I am committed to delivering for my constituents- with creativity, thoughtfulness, and persistence.

2. Program cuts should start with politically driven bureaucracy and optional tax giveaways, not core services. An example is Medicaid work-requirement bureaucracy. The State is hiring dozens of staff for early compliance, which adds cost and delays care. We need to comply with federal law in the leanest way possible. Next, we commit to passing laws that uphold our constitutional rights rather than knowingly violate them. Paying \$600 an hour to out of state attorneys to defend unconstitutional laws is an abuse of taxpayer dollars. Finally, we revisit recent income tax changes and other optional tax breaks that have and continue to reduce State revenue

before asking Montanans to accept cuts to services they rely on. Not every line in the budget is equal. Montana's Constitution protects obligations to public education, pension funding, and our clean and healthful environment. We must start with optional spending and bureaucracy before cutting into constitutionally grounded responsibilities.

3. I support revisiting property tax reforms. Property taxes are still too high and we need flexibility to respond to cost of living increases in a way that does not push people out of their homes. Here in Lewis and Clark County, our housing prices have increased by 68%, outpacing surrounding areas. I watched property tax policy evolve throughout the 2025 legislative session and I know we were working largely from projections. While many Montanans have experienced some relief, we can do better. In 2027, we will have real data and that information should drive the next round of reforms. I support property tax relief based on what people can actually afford. If your income is flat but your tax bill keeps climbing, something has to give. That is especially important for seniors on fixed incomes, working families, and renters who are paying those costs through their rent. I will continue working toward a tax system that is fair, transparent, and sustainable for the people who live here.

4. I do not support delisting grizzly bears at this time. Delisting would shift primary responsibility from the federal government

In touch with the people -

What I bring to the PCS:

- Advocating for **YOU!**
- Knowledge & Experience
- Great Work Ethic
- Passion to Serve **YOU!**

"I am committed to making All Montana citizens the #1 most important special interest group..."

PSC5 CANDIDATE

SCAN ME

Re-Elect Dr. ANNIE Bukacek

Paid for by: Dr. Annie for PSC5 P.O. Box 8975, Kalispell, MT 59904

to the State, including monitoring, conflict response, enforcement, and administration. I have worked in local natural resource management that included large carnivore conflict management and I know that the best outcomes come from local, practical solutions led by communities and landowners, supported by strong federal resources. Federal support helps carry the long-term burden of funding, oversight, and coordination. Moving too fast to delist before Montana has durable funding, adequate staffing, and a clear long-term plan risks stretching FWP thinner and forcing tradeoffs across other wildlife priorities. I support science-based management that prioritizes safety, sustainability, and local problem-solving. Delisting should only move forward when Montana can demonstrate long-term capacity to manage grizzlies well, year after year.

5. I do not support a statewide sales tax as the answer to Montana's revenue challenges. While I am hearing that some of my SD 41 neighbors would consider a sales tax, that's only if it directly reduces other taxes. We don't want a gap filler. We also need to be honest about who would pay. A sales tax is regressive, which means people with lower and middle incomes end up paying a bigger share. That is because working families spend more of their income on basics like clothes, school supplies, and household goods, while wealthier people can save or invest. With the cost of living on the rise, we need to keep as much cash in the pockets of working families as possible. A common myth is that a sales tax would mostly capture tourist dollars. Montana's own fiscal modeling shows that nonresidents would pay less than 12% and the overwhelming share would come from Montanans

Other states show us the risk. Tax systems that lean on sales taxes hurt working families and widen inequality.



SENATE DISTRICT 42

Note: One candidate for SD 42, Nicholas Lantette (Rep), did not participate in this questionnaire.



Mike Talia (Rep)

Age: 45
Location: Helena
Education: Graduate degree from UM
Occupation: Lawyer
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1. Reducing the tax burden on Montanans.
2. Government does not have to do all



THOM BRIDGE, INDEPENDENT RECORD

things for all people at all times. Government should focus on what is needed to create favorable conditions for economic production and safety. There is still money to be saved by spending smarter, deferring projects that can wait until we can afford them, and not buying into gold plated solutions.

3. Yes. The reforms of 2025 can be improved, for example by limiting increases from market rates as proposed in Senator Galt's recently announced constitutional initiative. There may also be room for better equalization between certain categories of property.

4. Yes, please. Management of grizzly bears should be a function of the state. The state is appropriately managing wolves. I believe grizzly bear populations are sufficient to end federal protections. Unfortunately, it may take an Act of Congress to get it done.

5. No. Montanans consistently oppose a sales tax. There are other ways to fund the state's needs and fairly allocate tax burdens.

We have left money on the table for many years by not making Montana more attractive to businesses. Continuing Governor Gianforte's workforce development programs and reducing housing costs can generate additional revenues.



Stephen LaPraim (Rep)



Age: 46
Location: Helena
Education: High School, and certifications.
Occupation: Business Owner
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1. Reduce taxes, and cut spending.
2. I am not a fan of the use it or loose it mentality. If we do not use all of the budget money,

then it should go to tax payer relief. Paying off bonds, and other debts. I believe on focusing on a solution. There are many ways to solve a problem. My years in business has proved that.

3. Absolutely! While the Homestead Act brought relief to primary home owners, the property tax was shifted to other types of properties. This has also put a larger burden income property owners, and the people renting those properties.

4. I support better management of our grizzly bears. If delisting allows us to do that, then yes.

5. No. If we managed state budgets like we would our own check books, we would not need it. We need to focus on better jobs more industry and less spending. Not to mention there would be no guarantee to to the tax payer that government would not continue to raise other taxes. Government managing your money is never a great answer.