

MONTANA CONSERVATIVE ALLIANCE

LEGISLATIVE CANDIDATE RATINGS & ENDORSEMENTS

2026

Unique, Principles-Based Approach

The MCA endorsement process provides a unique and deeper look into the conservative claims of Republicans running for the state legislature. In politics, talk is cheap. The real predictor of how a candidate will vote in the legislature is not his or her campaign rhetoric, but his *over-arching principles and philosophy of government*. Once elected, most “conservative” candidates are heavily influenced by political pressures and *bad ideas*. They may be good people, but they often become terribly inconsistent in their voting, and end up betraying their conservative constituents, who sent them to Helena to *reduce* government not grow it! To faithfully *defend* our freedom and Constitutional rights, not limit our liberties with more laws that we did not need and do not want. MCA ratings and endorsements are designed with this in mind, seeking to uncover the real *guiding principles* of each GOP candidate.

Here's how we accomplish that:

1. Our 58-question candidate survey is intentionally difficult, forcing candidates to think deeply about what they *really* believe, and at what level of *intensity*. Are these genuine *convictions* or just preferences, that won't hold up when confronted by flattery, clever-sounding arguments and the powers that be?

2. In our process, we address an extremely wide range of ideological issues and real world legislative choices. The scoring of our questionnaire is 100% objective. There are no essay questions that require subjective interpretation, and we do not consider any personal opinions we or others may have about the candidates.

3. We ask what books and materials candidates have read that most influence their *core beliefs and moral philosophy* – especially in areas of economics, history, philosophy, natural rights, the right to life and Constitutional law.

4. While a minimum grade of B+ is required for MCA endorsement, we acknowledge the public-spirited integrity of *every* candidate who participates in our survey with an “Honorable Mention” designation. We recognize that even those with inconsistent, partly statist philosophies can often be strengthened by the introduction of good ideas and open discussion. We also acknowledge that even legislators with a relatively weak understanding of the ideas of liberty can be strong leaders in specific issue areas, and hopefully build upon that over time.

5. Candidates who don’t respond are given an “F” grade, for failing to honor their duty to the voting public. Perhaps they reveal as much about themselves as those who gladly participate. No-shows seem to fall into one of two categories. They either (a) lack a sense of humility and public service toward *all* constituencies, or (b) they are “RINO”, big government Republicans. Liberal GOP candidates run like the wind from all MCA opinion surveys, knowing they will be quickly exposed for who they are. We encourage you to take these factors into consideration.

MCA’s principles-based criteria thus allows for multiple endorsements in a given legislative race, even while the candidates’ individual grades may vary

FFF = vicious, vile, expletive-laced refusal

GOP CANDIDATES FOR MONTANA STATE SENATE 2026

SD 1 ----- Steve Gunderson -- F

SD 1 ----- **Vincent Backen -- B+ (endorsed)**

SD 1 ----- Neil Duram -- F

SD 4 ----- Amy Regier -- F

SD 6 ----- **Mark Noland -- B+ (endorsed)**

SD 8 ----- Christopher Paul Buckles -- F

SD 9 ----- Zack Wirth -- HM

SD 9 ----- Llew Jones -- F

SD 10 ----- Jessica Dyrdaahl -- F

SD 10 ----- Maximus Dascoulias -- F

SD 11 ----- **Steven Galloway -- B+ (endorsed)**

SD 11 ----- Ed Buttrey -- F

SD 12 ----- Randy Pinocci -- HM

SD 12 ----- George Nikolakakos -- **FFF**

SD 14 ----- Eric Albus -- F

SD 14 ----- Mark L. Wicks -- HM

SD 18 ----- Greg Kmetz -- F

SD 18 ----- Doug Martens -- F

SD 19 ----- **Barry Usher -- A+ (endorsed)**

SD 19 ----- Chris Rindal -- HM

SD 22 ----- Daniel Zolnikov -- F

SD 23 ----- Joanna Oblander -- F

SD 25 ----- Dennis Lenz -- F

SD 25 ----- Tom Bick -- F

SD 28 ----- Forrest Mandeville -- F
SD 29 ----- **Jason Gunderson -- A (endorsed)**
SD 31 ----- Richard Aungier -- F
SD 32 ----- **Neal Ganser -- A (endorsed)**
SD 34 ----- Shelley Vance -- F
SD 34 ----- **Caleb Hinkle -- A+ (endorsed)**
SD 42 ----- **Stephen Lapraim -- A+ (endorsed)**
SD 42 ----- Nicholas Lancette -- F
SD 42 ----- Mike Talia -- F
SD 43 ----- David Bedey -- F
SD 43 ----- **Kathy Love -- A+ (endorsed)**
SD 49 ----- **Brad Tschida -- A+ (endorsed)**

GOP CANDIDATES FOR MONTANA STATE HOUSE 2026

HD 1 ----- Michelle Bianco -- F
HD 2 ----- **Tom Millett -- A+ (endorsed)**
HD 3 ----- **Cathy Mitchell -- A+ (endorsed)**
HD 3 ----- Derek Peachey -- F
HD 4 ----- **Shaun Pandina -- A+ (endorsed)**
HD 4 ----- Lyn Bennett -- F
HD 4 ----- Nathan Purdy -- F

HD 5 ----- Braxton Mitchell -- F
HD 6 ----- Jim Riley -- HM
HD 6 ----- Arthur Dunn -- F
HD 7 ----- Luke Maxwell -- F
HD 7 ----- Courtenay Sprunger -- F
HD 8 ----- Lukas Schubert -- F
HD 9 ----- Steve Kelly -- F
HD 10----- **Terry Falk -- A (endorsed)**
HD 11----- **Edward Byrne -- B+ (endorsed)**
HD 12----- **Tracy A. Sharp -- A (endorsed)**
HD 13----- Linda Reksten -- F
HD 13----- Finley Warden -- F
HD 14----- Paul Fielder -- F
HD 15----- *
HD 16----- *
HD 17----- **Justin Cleveland -- B+ (endorsed)**
HD 17----- Susan Geise -- F
HD 17----- Michael Fasbender -- F
HD 18----- Bruce "Butch" Gillespie -- F
HD 19----- Derren Auger -- F
HD 19----- Hannah Trebas -- F
HD 20----- **Tony Rosales -- A (endorsed)**
HD 20----- Melissa Nikolakakos -- F

HD 21----- Eric Peterson -- F

HD 21----- **Trevor Funseth -- A+ (endorsed)**

HD 22----- Jason Lorang -- F

HD 22----- **Kevin Leatherbarrow -- A (endorsed)**

HD 23----- Eric Tilleman -- F

HD 23----- Brett Mills -- F

HD 24----- Steve Fitzpatrick -- F

HD 25----- Steve Gist -- F

HD 26----- Russ Miner -- F

HD 27----- *

HD 28----- John South -- F

HD 28----- Chisholm B. Christensen -- F

HD 29----- **Linda Harmon -- A (endorsed)**

HD 29----- Valerie Moore -- F

HD 30----- Morgan Thiel -- F

HD 31----- *

HD 32----- *

HD 33----- Ric Holdon -- F

HD 33----- Brandon Ler -- F

HD 34----- **Jerry Schillinger -- A+ (endorsed)**

HD 34----- Jason Ellsworth -- F

HD 35----- Gary Parry -- F

HD 36----- **Ty Linger -- A (endorsed)**

HD 36----- **Loren Hinebauch – A+ (endorsed)**

HD 37----- Shane Klakken -- F

HD 38----- Greg Oblander -- F

HD 39----- Kerri Seekins Crowe -- F

HD 40----- Mike Vinton -- F

HD 41----- *

HD 42----- Jeremiah Jabs -- F

HD 43----- Larry Brewster -- F

HD 44----- Katie Zolnikov -- F

HD 45----- *

HD 46----- Kim Welzenbach -- F

HD 47----- Ron Stevens -- F

HD 47----- John Maxwell -- F

HD 48----- Curtis Schomer -- F

HD 49----- Charlie Loveridge -- F

HD 49----- Ole Hedstrom *

HD 50----- Stewart Harris -- F

HD 51----- Jodee Etchart -- F

HD 51----- **Lana Tibbetts -- A (endorsed)**

HD 52----- **Ed Walker -- A+ (endorsed)**

HD 52----- Stacy Zinn -- HM

HD 53----- **Nelly Nicol -- A (endorsed)**

HD 53----- Troy Charbonneau -- F

HD 54----- Lee Deming -- F
HD 55----- **Mary Harmon -- A (endorsed)**
HD 55----- Brad Barker -- F
HD 56----- Fiona Nave -- F
HD 57----- Bob Crank -- F
HD 58----- Joshua Congleton -- F
HD 59----- Marc Greendorfer -- HM
HD 60----- **Greg Leman -- A+ (endorsed)**
HD 61----- Eric Jacobs -- F
HD 62----- **Esther Fishbaugh -- A (endorsed)**
HD 63----- Lawrence Moore -- HM
HD 64----- **Daniel Martinez -- B+ (endorsed)**
HD 65----- Joe Flynn -- F
HD 66----- Owen Lang -- F
HD 67----- **Jedediah Hinkle -- A (endorsed)**
HD 68----- Jennifer Carlson -- F
HD 68----- **Randy Chamberlin -- A+ (endorsed)**
HD 69----- Ken Walsh -- F
HD 69----- **Trevor Walter -- A+ (endorsed)**
HD 70----- **Shannon Maness -- A (endorsed)**
HD 71----- Suzzanne Nordwick -- F
HD 72----- Michael Saul -- F
HD 73----- Gerry Kennedy -- F

HD 74----- Trenin Bayless *

HD 75----- Mark Reinschmidt *

HD 76----- Trish Schreiber -- F

HD 76----- John Fitzpatrick -- F

HD 77----- **Jane Gillette -- A+ (endorsed)**

HD 78----- **Randyn Gregg -- A (endorsed)**

HD 79----- Chiko Olson -- F

HD 80----- Katie Fruits -- F

HD 81----- John Looney -- F

HD 82----- Clinton Mckay -- F

HD 83----- Aaron Leas -- F

HD 84----- Roy Caldwell -- HM

HD 84----- James Marshal -- F

HD 85----- Michele Binkley -- F

HD 85----- **Kim Dailey -- A+ (endorsed)**

HD 86----- Wayne Rusk -- F

HD 86----- **Kenneth Allen -- A+ (endorsed)**

HD 87----- **Terry Nelson -- B+ (endorsed)**

HD 88----- Greg Overstreet -- F

HD 89----- **Lyn Hellegaard -- A (endorsed)**

HD 90----- Curtis Cochran

HD 90----- **Jeff Stanek -- B+ (endorsed)**

HD 91----- Charles Headley -- F

HD 92----- *

HD 93----- Roy Handley -- F

HD 94----- **Greg Woodward -- B+ (endorsed)**

HD 95----- *

HD 96----- *

HD 97----- Michael Hagestad -- F

HD 98----- Bryan Muzzana *

HD 99----- **Ryan Darling -- A (endorsed)**

HD100----- Michael Bowles -- F

Asterisk * = District has no Republican candidate, or Republican is unreachable (no valid email or phone number on file with the Secretary Of State.)

Final Note: We encourage you to review the endorsement decisions of other organizations and individual leaders as well. We don't hold up MCA as the "end all" source of political wisdom! Be sufficiently aware though, that many purportedly "conservative" organizations have rating systems and endorsements that are based narrowly on their own particular interests, and can therefore create a false impression of a candidate's overall conservative philosophy. Then there are organizations that are much more "political" than philosophically conservative. An example would be groups that are blindly loyal to President Trump, and thus automatically support Trump loyalists running for office. Much better sources are broad-based conservative organizations like Montanans For Limited Government, Big Sky Worldview Forum and the freedom Caucus, which are well worth consulting before deciding who to vote for and who to help.

