

The MONTANA STANDARD  
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# VOTER GUIDE

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2024 GENERAL  
ELECTION

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

## LEE MONTANA

Welcome to the Lee Montana 2024 Voter Guide.

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

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

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

### Mission statement

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

### Who's doing the work?

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



STOCK IMAGE

The 2024 Montana general election day is November 5.

### How do we choose what to cover?

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

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

tana choices might determine national outcomes.

### What won't we cover?

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

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

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

transparent about our own reporting. We welcome public and constructive criticism about the work we do, and pledge to be responsive to public feedback.

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

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

### How are we doing?

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



# RE-ELECT SHERIFF LESTER

**EXPERIENCED • DEDICATED • PROFESSIONAL**

- BUTTE NATIVE
- MARRIED TO JUNE PUSICH-LESTER FOR 27 YEARS. WE HAVE 3 ADULT SONS. TASH (24), EGAN (21), NICK (19)
- GRADUATED FROM BUTTE CENTRAL 1984
- ATTENDED MONTANA TECH 1984-1986 (GENERAL STUDIES)
- MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY 1986-1988, BACHELOR OF SCIENCE DEGREE IN SOCIOLOGY (EMPHASIS IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE)
- WORKED AT THE BUTTE PRE-RELEASE CENTER (NOW CCCS) ONE YEAR
- 35 YEARS AS A LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER IN BUTTE-SILVER BOW (1989-PRESENT)
- 9 YEARS ON PATROL (MOSTLY NIGHT SHIFT)
- PATROL SUPERVISOR
- SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER AT BUTTE HIGH SCHOOL
- JUVENILE INVESTIGATIONS-3 YEARS
- VIOLENT AND SEXUAL CRIMES INVESTIGATIONS-13 YEARS
- DETECTIVE LIEUTENANT (INVESTIGATIVE SUPERVISOR)
- 17 YEARS ON BUTTE SWAT TEAM AS AN OPERATOR AND SNIPER.
- SERVED AS DEPARTMENTAL FIREARMS AND SWAT INSTRUCTOR
- BUTTE-SILVER BOW SHERIFF 2013-PRESENT

**WE'VE BEEN THROUGH A LOT TOGETHER. GO WITH THE EXPERIENCED CANDIDATE YOU KNOW AND TRUST! PLEASE CONSIDER A VOTE TO RE-ELECT SHERIFF ED LESTER! THANK YOU!**

Paid for by Ed Lester for Sheriff, 3032 Edwards, Butte, MT 59701

# 2024 General Election Voter Guide: **The Questions**

## U.S. Senate/House

**1.** Montana saw soaring temperatures this summer. The climate is warmer and drier because of changes in the climate, fueling larger wildfires around the West. Montanans suffer with poor air quality and from serious heat-related illness. Farmers and ranchers are dealing with the impacts of warmer summers through changed growing seasons and challenges maintaining herd health. If elected, what policies would you support to help Montanans navigate these changes?

**2.** What role, if any, do you believe the federal government should play in either ensuring or limiting access to abortion? Under what circumstances do you believe abortion should be legal?

**3.** What spending reductions would you propose in Congress to address the national debt?

**4.** Affording a home, either renting or buying, has become out of reach for an increasing number of Montanans. What would you do at the federal level to ensure people can find a place to live that fits within their budget?

**5.** Do you support the U.S. sending aid to Ukraine and Israel?

## Governor

**1.** Would you sign a bill continuing Medicaid expansion in Montana past 2025? Why or why not?

**2.** What more can state government do to ensure housing in Montana is affordable?

**3.** What is the most effective way state government can reduce property taxes on Montanans? What do you identify as the main catalyst in increased property taxes in Montana?

**4.** What obligation does the state have in reducing carbon emissions? How would you accomplish this? What do you interpret the state constitution's provision for clean and healthful environment to mean when it comes to crafting state energy policy?

**5.** Native Americans in Montana die a generation younger than their white neighbors. What will you do to improve health outcomes in tribal communities?

## Attorney General

**1.** What are the most effective things to be done within the state of Montana to stem the fentanyl overdose crisis?

**2.** How much should the state be involved in litigation at the federal level that did not originate in the state of Montana?



THOM BRIDGE, INDEPENDENT RECORD FILE

The Montana State Capitol in Helena.

**3.** Indigenous persons make up more than 30% of those missing in Montana but only account for about 6% of the state's population. How would you work to address this epidemic?

**4.** How would you work to improve the culture and performance of the Montana Highway Patrol?

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

## Secretary of State

**1.** How would you use this office to foster trust in our elections and relationships with local elections workers?

**2.** What can this office do to ease the process of registering a business in Montana?

**3.** Do you support open primaries in Montana?

**4.** Are you satisfied with the office's business fee collection model? If not, how would you change it?

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

## Montana Senate/House

**1.** Would you vote to continue Medicaid expansion past 2025?

**2.** What is the most effective way that state government can reduce property taxes on Montanans?

**3.** What more can state government do to ensure housing in Montana is affordable? Are subsidies appropriate?

**4.** How would you ensure you're communicating with the voters in your district and understand what issues they identify as most important to your district?

## Superintendent of Public Instruction

**1.** How would you improve the impact of and accountability to the state's Indian Education for All program?

**2.** How would you work to improve teacher recruitment and retention in Montana?

**3.** The Office of Public Instruction has seen massive turnover over the last four years. What would you do to rebuild the agency?

**4.** Do you support the expansion of charter schools in Montana?

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

## State Auditor

**1.** How would you use this office to advocate for consumers in Montana?

**2.** Where would you focus this office's investigatory branch?

**3.** How would you elevate awareness about the resources offered by the state auditor?

**4.** What policies or laws would you like to see implemented to address the role of pharmacy benefit managers?

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

## Supreme Court Justice

**1.** How do you believe your judicial philosophy is distinct from your opponent?

**2.** How would you work to ensure an independent judiciary and preserve the non-partisan nature of this election?

**3.** How would you make the court more



## MONTANA 2024 GENERAL ELECTION VOTER GUIDE: STAFF

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

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accessible and understandable to Montanans?

## Supreme Court Clerk

**1.** How would you balance the partisan nature of this office with the nonpartisan positions of judges?

**2.** How would you make the court more accessible and understandable to Montanans?

## Public Service Commission

**1.** Montanans are struggling with high utility bills. How can the PSC bring those down?

**2.** Legislative audits in recent years have found "commission misconduct and management issues." What steps would you take to ensure the agency's operations are efficient and accessible to the public?

**3.** As Montana faces changes to its energy landscape and Colstrip retires units, what should the PSC do to ensure Montanans have access to reliable, affordable energy?

**4.** What are your qualifications for this position?

# COMPARE THE CANDIDATES ON THE ISSUES



**JON TESTER**  
**THIRD-GENERATION DIRT FARMER DEFENDING MONTANA EVERY DAY**



**TIM SHEEHY**  
**WEALTHY OUTSIDER WHO MONTANANS CAN'T TRUST**

✓ Jon and his wife, Sharla, still live in the home they built in Big Sandy in 1993. He's fighting to cut taxes for first-time home buyers and stop out-of-state developers from buying up property and pricing Montanans out.

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING



Sheehy moved to Montana, bought up thousands of acres and three mansions, and started renting his property to rich out-of-staters like him.

✓ Jon Tester has always protected Medicare and recently lowered prescription drug costs for Montana seniors. He's kept our rural hospitals open and has always protected Montanans with pre-existing conditions.

## HEALTH CARE



Tim Sheehy's "pure privatization" plan would dismantle Medicare, eliminate protections for pre-existing conditions, raise prescription drug costs, and shutter rural hospitals and nursing homes.

✓ Jon has a bill to make Roe v. Wade the law of the land and will always fight to keep politicians out of Montanans' health care decisions.

## FREEDOM TO CHOOSE



Tim Sheehy supports letting politicians ban abortion here in Montana even in the case of rape, incest or the health of the mother.

✓ Jon passed bills to protect tens of thousands of acres and hundreds of miles of Montana rivers for future generations to enjoy. He will always stand up to anyone who wants to transfer, sell, or eliminate our state's greatest natural treasures.

## PUBLIC LAND

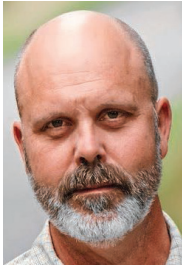


Tim Sheehy called to transfer public lands so wealthy outsiders like himself can buy up even more. He even bought up prime elk habitat and then sold access to rich tourists while refusing access to Montanans.

Paid for by Montanans for Tester.

TO LEARN MORE OR TO VOLUNTEER ON JON'S CAMPAIGN: [JONTESTER.COM](http://JONTESTER.COM) / [@JONTESTER](https://www.facebook.com/JONTESTER) / [JONTESTER](https://www.instagram.com/JONTESTER)

**JON TESTER FOR U.S. SENATE**

**GOVERNOR****Ryan Busse — D****Age:** 54**Home:** Kalispell**Family:** Married to Sara for 25 years; two teenage sons**Occupation:** Writer, firearms expert and former executive (Vice President of Sales,

Kimber America: 1995-2020)

**Education:** Bethany College (Kansas)**Contact information for voters:**

busseformontana.com, info@busseformontana.com

**1.** Absolutely. I won't just sign an expansion into law; I will champion it through the Montana Legislature every step of the way until it reaches my desk. I regularly meet with parents, businesses, hospitals and health care providers across the state, and I know this issue is far bigger than partisan politics. Keeping Medicaid expanded is a matter of keeping Montana's communities and economies strong by ensuring that rural hospitals, clinics and nursing homes stay open. Under Greg Gianforte's watch, Montana has lost more than a dozen nursing homes and hundreds of nursing home beds. More than 134,000 Montanans—including 36,000 children — needlessly lost health coverage because of Greg Gianforte's inability to run this state, and he stuck working families with red tape and uncertainty. When asked about it, what did the Governor say? He said his plan to kick Montanans out of their health care plans is "working as intended." That's not just bad business; it's cruel.

**2.** The State of Montana can take three immediate steps to make housing more affordable. Step one: Lower the residential property tax rate from 1.35% to .94%. This will provide relief to Governor Gianforte's record-high property taxes and put money back in the pockets of homeowners and renters, and it's what our own Department of Revenue recommended (Gianforte ignored this recommendation). Step two: Champion and support low-income housing tax credits to get resources to people who need to live in Montana, not to wealthy developers who want to get richer. Step three: Refocus the Montana Department of Labor to get to work building a stronger union workforce

that can quickly meet construction demands for new housing. Bottom line: We need to build more. Under Gianforte's administration, the Department of Labor is too focused on "culture war" issues and not on its actual mission.

**3.** This is a fact: Governor Gianforte is solely to blame for your record-high property tax hikes. Gianforte knows his tax hike is his political disaster, so he falsely blames his increase on county and municipal governments that "spend too much." This is a lie, and Gianforte knows it. So do many local elected Republican leaders across Montana, who are publicly criticizing Gianforte for lying about them. Only Montana's Governor approves the residential property tax rate and only he signs it into law. So the sole reason you're paying record high property taxes is Greg Gianforte. How can we reduce your property taxes? It's an incredibly simple fix: Lower the residential property tax rate from 1.35% to .94% (or by whatever amount the Department of Revenue recommends to keep property taxes "revenue neutral"). This will be a Day One priority for my running mate Raph Graybill and me, because Gianforte's property tax increase has been as high as 111%. I don't know what you call that in New Jersey, but in Montana we call that highway robbery.

**4.** Montana's Constitution guarantees certain rights that are not up for debate, like the right to privacy and the right to know what our government is doing. Another is the right to a "clean and healthful environment." That means we have an obligation to make sure our water is clean enough to drink and our air is safe enough to breathe. And Montanans owe it to ourselves and to future generations to take carbon emissions into account when developing energy, to cut pollution wherever we can and to leave our kids a future worth inheriting. We can do this without losing good-paying jobs, by the way. We cannot switch from coal and other fossil fuels overnight, but there are economic forces at work that are pricing these resources out of the equation. It's on us to play where the puck is going to be; not where the puck is. That's why — in addition to harnessing renewable energy resources — Raph Graybill and I support clean, safe, small-scale nuclear energy development in places like Colstrip, which is supported by the union coal workers who have endorsed our campaign.

**5.** Improving access to quality health care in tribal communities (and for Indigenous people who live in more

urban communities) is just one of the many challenges we face when it comes to the State of Montana's government-to-government relationship with sovereign Indigenous Nations. I've visited these communities across the state, and it's clear Governor Gianforte has failed to do this too. The first thing I'll do as governor is to ensure that my administration will be robustly represented by Indigenous People, across all agencies and departments, and especially in leadership positions. From there, Raph Graybill and I will work closely with our partners to expand Medicaid, to ensure that the federal government is meeting its treaty obligations, and to invest in physical infrastructure (like access to broadband, nutritious food, quality public education and rural health care facilities) to ensure that Indigenous communities can provide self-determination to their members.

**Greg Gianforte — R****Age:** 62**Home:** Helena**Family:** My wife Susan and I have been married since 1988. We have four children, and four grandchildren.**Occupation:** Governor of Montana

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

**Contact information for voters:**

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

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

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

down to pre-pandemic levels.

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

**2.** With the Biden-Harris affordability crisis, too many Montanans are struggling to make ends meet. Housing costs are too high. In the past decade, demand for housing has grown, but homebuilding hasn't kept up. I'm proud of what we've done to address the affordable housing crisis, but there's more to do. Working with legislators and the bipartisan Housing Task Force I launched, we made Montana a national leader, delivering historic pro-housing reforms that will boost supply and make housing more attainable. Some pro-housing advocates are calling our bipartisan reforms the "Montana Miracle."

Government spending alone won't solve the housing crisis, so we've prioritized reforms to boost housing supply while safeguarding our communities from sprawl. Recently, I met with the Housing Task Force for the third time and received 23 new recommendations aimed at making housing more affordable and attainable.

**3.** Property taxes in Montana are too high. About 85% of property tax revenue from Montana homeowners goes directly to local governments, with the other 15% going to fund local schools. Unfortunately, some counties have not been fiscally responsible, needlessly driving up Montanans' property taxes. In 2023, we secured the largest property tax rebate in state history for Montana homeowners and delivered permanent reforms that save over \$120 million, fully offsetting property tax hikes for the average homeowner.

The task force I launched this year recently suggested long-term solutions, including a homestead exemption for Montana homeowners. This will provide Montana homeowners with long-term relief and ensure out-of-staters — who don't live here, don't pay income taxes here, and own second homes here — pay their fair share to fund our schools, law enforcement, and roads and bridges. Our plan could reduce property taxes for about 350,000 Montana homeowners and renters and for about 30,000 Montana small businesses. Unlike our plan that benefits Montanans, my opponent would raise taxes on Montana small businesses, farms, and ranches by up

to 20% to give rich out-of-staters a huge property tax break.

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

Our nation must have an all-of-the-above energy policy, like Montana does, to become energy independent and secure again. Unfortunately, the Biden administration has put its thumb on the scale, picking winners and losers for energy sources. We haven't, and won't, in Montana. We must continue to expand energy production, from all sources, to keep pace with rising demand and ensure electricity is affordable and reliable for Montanans. That's what guides my approach to energy policy.

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

After previous governors kicked the can down the road, we made a historic \$300 million investment to improve the delivery

of behavioral health care throughout our state. We're expanding community-based behavioral health care and developmental disabilities services.

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



**Kaiser Leib – L**



**Age:** 36

**Home:** Helena

**Family:** Single

**Occupation:** Comedian

**Education:**  
Bachelor's, Math and Computer Science, The University of Montana, 2009

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

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

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

That being said, state government has consistently increased the portion of property taxes which are paid by homeowners, far beyond the pace of property value increases. The biggest culprit is the legislature's ongoing policy of shifting taxes from businesses to homeowners—most recently at the behest

of the sitting governor.

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

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

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

# CINDY SHERMAN



EXPERIENCE  
DILIGENCE  
INTEGRITY

**for CLERK & RECORDER**

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- ✓ ONLY CANDIDATE with Clerk & Recorder Office EXPERIENCE!

**Vote for EXPERIENCE. Vote CINDY SHERMAN.**

Paid for by CITIZENS FOR CINDY SHERMAN, 827 S Montana St, Rear, Butte, MT 59701



**U.S. SENATE****Tim Sheehy – R****Age:** 38**Home:** Bozeman**Family:** Wife, Carmen, and four young children**Occupation:** Former Navy SEAL, Aerial Firefighter, Founder and Former CEO of Bridger Aerospace**Education:** U.S. Naval Academy**Contact information for voters:** info@timformt.com

**1.** The climate has always been changing, but the Leftist Climate Cult agenda is about control, not the environment. We must stand strong against the radical liberal Harris-Tester job-killing energy agenda.

Despite what Jon Tester wants you to believe, Montanans can responsibly develop our natural resources while protecting the environment. Tester abandoned Montana when he helped kill the Keystone XL Pipeline, and wants to “move off fossil fuels” which would drive up costs, cripple producers, and shutter Colstrip.

I will advance commonsense policies that prioritize innovation, not government regulation, to support both a strong Montana economy and healthy environment.

**2.** My wife, Carmen, and I are proudly pro-life and support commonsense exceptions for rape, incest, and the life of the mother. Carmen and I strongly believe in helping bring more life into this world, which is why we proudly helped bring the upgraded neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) to Southwest Montana through our philanthropy to provide critical care to at-risk infants and specialty pediatric services ranging from surgeries to behavioral health.

Like most Montanans, I believe that Jon Tester’s position of allowing an elective abortion up until the moment of birth is extreme and barbaric.

**3.** If we’re going to defeat inflation and hand our kids a solvent nation, Congress must end its out-of-control spending that’s driven costs sky-high.

America is \$35 trillion in debt, and Jon Tester has done nothing about it. In fact,



he’s voted to raise the debt ceiling 14x. Let’s be clear: the federal government has a spending problem – not a revenue problem.

We must balance the budget and begin to lower our national debt. The quickest way to balance the budget is to ensure that politicians who fail to pass a balanced budget don’t get paid. No balanced budget, no paycheck!

**4.** Skyrocketing housing costs are killing the American Dream, thanks to trillions in spending by Harris and Tester that have given us record-high inflation, sky-high interest rates, and higher building costs.

I will help defeat inflation by working to end the out-of-control spending and the disastrous economic policies that are crushing Montana families and small businesses.

We must also build more homes with

Montana timber and promote trades education to create more high-paying jobs, lower housing costs, boost housing supply, support our communities, and build a stronger future for Montana. That’s common sense.

**5.** Having worked alongside our Israeli intelligence and military allies as a Navy SEAL, I stand with Israel one hundred percent. But the best thing we can do for Israel is quit funding the world’s largest state sponsor of terrorism–Iran–which Jon Tester has repeatedly supported.

We must fix our spending problem, balance the budget, begin to lower our national debt, and most importantly, put Montanans and America First!

We must start cutting wasteful spending that doesn’t put America First – that means no more blank checks to Ukraine or sending billions to regimes, like Iran, that chant “Death to America!”

**Sid Daoud – L****Age:** 56**Home:** Kalispell**Family:** Wife KristenMarie, son Antranik, son Kaden, daughter Cyan**Occupation:** Senior Consultant at Summit7 Systems**Education:** CMR Graduate and two years at MSU**Contact information for voters:** [HTTPS://LibertySid.com](https://libertysid.com); Sid.Daoud@libertysid.com

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

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

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

**4.** Compensation should not be set, this lowers compensation for all. The free market should dictate wages. Wages will increase naturally in years where we have extreme forest fires. Additionally, The State of Montana should be given the charge of taking care of not only state but federal forests so that we can



responsibly thin them to prevent large scale disasters. Local control surpasses Federal control every time.

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



**Jon Tester – D**



**Age:** 67

**Home:** Big Sandy

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



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

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

**Education:** College of Great Falls

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

1. Sharla and I see the impacts of

climate change firsthand on our farm. Oil and gas remain a critical part of how we power our country, and we should also be developing clean energy technologies to tackle climate change, create good-paying American jobs, secure our energy independence, and invest directly in Montana companies researching innovative ways to produce energy technologies that lower costs for consumers. My infrastructure bill invested in updating energy grids to prevent and protect against wildfire, and I'm pushing to invest in research and development

of technologies like carbon capture and storage to reduce carbon emissions.

2. I do not support a federal ban on abortion. I will always fight to protect Montana women's freedom to make their own health care decisions, because no Montanan wants the government telling them what to do.

The last time I ran for reelection, Roe v. Wade had been the law of the land for nearly 50 years. Its repeal was the largest reduction of freedoms in my lifetime – and the attacks on women's freedoms and privacy are just beginning. I fought in the Senate to pass the Women's Health Protection Act, which would have enshrined the protections of Roe v. Wade into law.

3. The deficit is out of control and both parties are to blame. In Montana, we know how to balance a budget and live within our means. That is why I authored a balanced budget proposal. It would protect Social Security and Medicare benefits that our seniors have earned while still forcing the federal government to stop racking up the debt and passing it along to our kids and grandkids. We also need to hold massive corporations accountable and make them pay their fair share.

# A Proven Leader that Gets Results

4 YEARS OF BUTTE-SILVER BOW PROSPERITY

- ✓ Record low unemployment 3.2%
- ✓ 1153 new jobs created in tenure
- ✓ Median income increased over \$8400 outpacing inflation
- ✓ Population increased to over 36K first time we've had continued population growth since the 1920's
- ✓ Over \$28 million in federal grants awarded for infrastructure projects that would otherwise fall to the taxpayers
- ✓ Over \$400 million in permitted work in commercial, industrial and residential construction



**J.P. GALLAGHER**



**M**

**For Chief Executive**

I was proud to support the Inflation Reduction Act, which is paying down our deficit by hundreds of billions of dollars.

**4.** Out-of-state millionaires are buying up second and third homes across the state and spiking prices for Montana families. You shouldn't need a million bucks to keep a roof over your head, and that's why I'm fighting to bring down the cost of housing.

I've introduced a bill to give first-time home buyers a tax credit so folks can get their foot in the door to buy their first home. And I'm taking on corporations and hedge funds who are buying up residential homes for short-term rentals and pricing out families. I've also secured resources to increase the supply of housing across the state.

**5.** As Chairman of the Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, I'll always stand up to defend America. Our military priorities should lie in protecting America, supporting our allies when appropriate, and staying ahead of our adversaries like China and Russia who want to replace us as the world's leading superpower.

We should be strategic and only involve America in foreign conflicts when it strengthens our alliances and benefits the United States. The United States can't and shouldn't get involved in every foreign conflict, but America is safer when we our allies know they can trust us to stand by them.

## ATTORNEY GENERAL

### Austin Knudsen – R



**Age:** 43

**Home:** Helena

**Family:** Wife Christie, three children in middle and high school

**Occupation:** current Attorney General; previous Roosevelt County Attorney, 10

years in private practice

**Education:** B.A. from Montana State University, J.D. from University of Montana

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

**1.** Addressing the overdose crisis is one of my top priorities. As Attorney General, I've strengthened our state drug task forces, hired additional narcotics agents, and provided 24 drug-detecting K9 units to agencies across Montana. The results speak for themselves: We've

seized more than half a million fentanyl doses in just two years. To stem the crisis, we must continue to disrupt drug trafficking networks, coordinate closely with local law enforcement and public health agencies, and hold the federal government accountable for securing the southern border, as 100% of fentanyl entering Montana is manufactured by cartels Mexico.

**2.** The federal policies coming out of the Biden administration have been a disaster for Montana, threatening our economy, energy security, and individual rights. Montana must be proactive in federal litigation when the federal government's actions threaten our state's safety and constitutional rights. Under my leadership, we have filed more than 50 lawsuits against the Biden administration, challenging overreaching policies on the border, gun rights, energy, and other issues of importance to our state. Federal actions directly impact Montanans, and I will continue to protect our state's interests through federal litigation, especially in cases that affect our communities and liberties.

**3.** The disproportionate number of missing Indigenous persons is a tragedy I've worked to address by dedicating more resources to investigations and improving coordination with tribal and federal agencies. We've launched awareness campaigns and expanded partnerships with nonprofits to ensure these cases get the attention they deserve. I will continue to push for the federal government to step up and protect Indian Country, better communication between law enforcement agencies, and community engagement to combat this epidemic, find the missing, and bring justice to affected families.

**4.** The Montana Highway Patrol is an indispensable asset to public safety in Montana. As Attorney General, I've prioritized training and accountability within the Montana Highway Patrol. We've added resources to improve officer performance and morale, while strengthening partnerships with local law enforcement agencies to ensure safety across the state. Just this year, every single trooper received a \$4 per hour raise – the equivalent of 14 percent for a starting trooper. Going forward, I'll continue to focus on professional development, clear protocols, and supporting troopers who work hard to keep Montana's roads and communities safe.

**5.** As a member of the Land Board, I've worked to maximize revenue for Montana schools while balancing conservation and

responsible resource development. We've generated revenue through sustainable land management practices and supported local. Our approach is working: Just this month, we approved a record-setting \$2.85 million oil and gas lease sale on state trust lands. Ensuring schools receive the funding they need, maximizing the long-term value of state trust lands for future generations, and balancing multiple uses will remain my top priorities during my second term as Attorney General.



### Ben Alke – D



**Age:** 45

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Law enforcement is a complex collaboration between federal, state, tribal, and local agencies. It's about working together and getting stuff done – not about press releases.

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

recover money for Montanans.

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

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

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

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

I will also implement the recommendations of a recent employee survey of the Montana Highway Patrol that revealed a lack of trust in the Attorney General's leadership. Unfortunately, rather than embrace the results and recommendations of this project, the current Attorney General cancelled the program and ordered that all copies of the results of the survey be destroyed.

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

**SECRETARY OF STATE****Christi Jacobsen – R****Age:** 48**Home:** Born and raised in Helena**Family:** Husband and five children**Occupation:** Secretary of State**Education:** Capital High School, Helena, BA Carroll College, Helena, Master's Public Administration, Missoula**Contact information for voters:** info@christijacobsen.com

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

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

**3.** Montana is a red state that is adamant about limited government, while also fiercely independent. Most Montanans I talk to enjoy not having to register by party. At the same time, I feel for those who are upset by the political warfare played through crossover gamesmanship. When it comes to evaluating primary policy proposals, the devil is always in the

details, and I would have to thoroughly review what is proposed to make a decision. Most Montanans enjoy our current system, but I recognize that there are instances where it is abused unfairly.

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

**5.** Managing our state lands is near and dear to my heart because my family is a product of public schools and public land users. I fight for public access, properly funding our schools, responsible development of our natural resources, and protecting private property rights. I am proud of my work with timber and agriculture industries to protect our way of life. I have delivered by creating hundreds of thousands of new public land acres to recreate on, delivered access to landlocked lands for backcountry hunters, and prime fishing access locations for generations to enjoy God's beauty in this state.

**Jesse James Mullen – D****Age:** 40**Home:** Deer Lodge**Family:** father of five**Occupation:** small business owner**Education:** Studied journalism at the University of Wyoming**Contact information for voters:** jessejamesmullen.com

**1.** The credibility of our elections is undermined by Montana's current Secretary of State using misinformation to play national political games. Republican and Democrat election officials across Montana run the most secure elections in America. My opponent used public dollars to distribute fake voting information in 2022. She is suing to limit voter access and disenfranchise Montana's youth and Tribes



**SARA (PALMER) NOVAK  
FOR SENATE DISTRICT 36**
*Experience Matters!*

Top legislative priorities include creating strong, healthy communities by fighting for & supporting:

- ✓ Public education – Opportunities for students & proper funding
- ✓ Housing & taxes:
  - Realistic affordable housing for homeowners and renters alike
  - Increased opportunities for housing developments, including multi-family units.
  - Lower property taxes & fair taxation
- ✓ Protecting public lands, stream access & conservation efforts
- ✓ Access to affordable health insurance & quality healthcare, including mental health
- ✓ Medicaid expansion
- ✓ Access to affordable & quality childcare
- ✓ Worker's rights
- ✓ State employees & public institutions such as State Hospital & Prison



by promoting unconstitutional bills from the legislature. I spent my career holding politicians accountable. I will continue to prioritize accurate and timely information and highlight the achievements of Montana's dedicated local officials.

**2.** Customer service is lacking and needed. I built customer service centers for some of the largest media companies in the US. State employees must be capable, competent, and accessible to the public. Our state will work again for Montana's small-business owners, not the out-of-state mega-corporations and tech bros dodging California taxes. Montanans don't need special rules for small businesses, but we do need a registration system that works and acknowledges Montana's locally-owned businesses are the backbone of Main Street.

**3.** Montanans vote for the person, not the party. I support giving Montanans a real choice in primary elections. Partisan candidates will be accountable to all Montanans if they want to use public resources for ballot access. Montana's Independents are a fast-growing segment of the population, and parties won't get special rules to play by while forcing Montanans to join an organization they don't support. Yes, I support open primaries. With both major parties against open primaries, I think that's a good argument in favor.

**4.** The Secretary of State overcharged Montana businesses and refused to issue refunds without making Montanans jump through hoops. Businesses have to sue to fix known issues her department ignores, costing Montanans. The public shouldn't have to pay to defend an executive who won't do the job. I put Montanans first. That means better information for our small business owners and support from the Secretary of State's office to allow them to file without hiring expensive third-party organizations. And plain and simple, some people still like to pay by check.

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

## OFFICE OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION STATE SUPERINTENDENT

### Susie Hedalen — R



**Age:** 40

**Home:** Townsend

**Family:** Married to my husband Derrick

**Occupation:** Superintendent of Townsend School District

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

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

**1.** Montana's Constitution mandates Indian Education for All (IEFA), setting our public education apart. Alongside my teaching and administrative credentials, I hold a Native American Studies certificate and am the liaison for the Montana Advisory Council on Indian Education. It's vital all Montana students grasp our tribal nations' cultural depth. As State Superintendent, I'll infuse tribal history into civics education, collaborating with tribal leaders and offering educator training integrating IEFA across the curriculum. Honoring this mandate fosters inclusivity and awareness in Montana's classrooms. Fiscal reporting will monitor funding for high-quality Indian Education materials and professional development. As State Superintendent, I will ensure OPI supports districts in a meaningful tribal consultation process.

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

Collaborating with the Montana University System to recruit students into education and mental health professions is essential. Streamlining administrative processes in education redirects resources to classrooms. Advocating for federal authorities to ease unnecessary

mandates empowers educators. As State Superintendent, I'll champion these efforts to ensure quality education reaches every Montana community.

**3.** As an experienced administrator, I understand that no organization can be effectively run without appropriate staffing levels of highly qualified professionals. State government is no different. In order to effectively serve Montana's educators and families, the Office of Public Instruction needs to have experienced individuals who are committed to serving our local communities, schools, and parents. In addition to building the OPI with strong employees, I will work to strategically reduce red tape and bureaucracy while streamlining agency functions. This will allow the OPI to focus on serving local communities. I am committed to responsive constituent services and proactive agency operations to improve response times, support educator professional development, and drive greater focus on academic achievement for students.

**4.** Last year, the Legislature approved public charter schools in Montana, a pivotal move for educational advancement. As a Board of Public Education member, I advocated for 19 top-tier charter schools statewide, 17 of which opened this fall. Montana now aligns with 45 states in broadening school choice within public education through these pioneering institutions.

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

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



### Shannon O'Brien — D



**Age:** 55

**Home:** Missoula

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

**Occupation:** Retired Educator

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

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

**1.** In keeping with our constitutional obligation, I would ensure the goal of Indian Education for All is met — that every Montana student learns an accurate history that includes Native people, understands tribal sovereignty, and is aware of contemporary Native issues. IEFA funding should be used for these purposes and OPI can ensure accountability for those dollars through school finance reporting systems. That said, my emphasis would be on impact, not paperwork.

OPI should provide the professional development, curricular resources, and encouragement that help the professionals implementing IEFA programming actively engage teachers and students in elevating Native history and culture.

**2.** We need to meet this crisis head-on by addressing the issues driving Montana teachers out of state or into another profession. To start, we must ensure Montana teachers earn a living wage.

We must encourage and help replicate creative local efforts to provide affordable teacher housing. Beyond that, we need to lift up teaching as a profession. Working with the Montana University System, we must ensure students heading off to college see teaching as a viable career path and have financial incentives to pursue it. Once in the classroom, teachers should see OPI as the valuable resource it once was.

**3.** An independent audit of the financial and programmatic situation at OPI would identify major gaps and suggest triage priorities, but the complaint I hear repeatedly from school districts is the need to be responsive. Not answering the phone or getting back to people is unacceptable. Under my leadership OPI will be responsive. I'm committed to

building a culture of service and restoring the pride we all once had in that office. Working with educators, community leaders, business owners and universities over the last 12 years, I know Montana has an abundance of talent that can be tapped to rebuild OPI.

**4.** We have a responsibility to our taxpayers to spend their money effectively and transparently. The PUBLIC charter schools are showing great promise and innovation in both areas. The PRIVATE charter schools, however, with limited oversight and no obligation to meet public expectations, are unconstitutional. We cannot dedicate precious resources to private education for a select few. Montanans love their local school and they trust their teachers. We can and we must fund public education adequately to provide a free, quality public education for every Montana child.

**5.** Simply put, we must protect our public lands. Because the revenue generated from our public lands helps fund public schools, the Superintendent's role on the Land Board is especially important. As a Land Board member, I will vote to protect public access and make sure that leases of public lands are fair

and equitable to both the state and the people leasing the land, while providing optimal support for public education. I will never support the sale of Montana's public lands.

### PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION DISTRICT 2

#### Brad Molnar — R



**Age:** 74

**Home:** Laurel

**Family:** Married, three children, 12 grandkids, five great-grandkids

**Occupation:** Senator, retired

**Education:** three years UM Forestry and journalism, certificate in energy regulation and International Energy from U of Michigan/NARUC

**Contact information for voters:** Brad. Molnar@yahoo.com, 406-794-5982

**1.** See 3) below. Much of the recent rate increase was not from PSC actions. ie 30% was property taxes. The legislature needs

to address this causation. None have appealed claiming that the arithmetic is wrong. Many judicial rulings, reversing PSC rulings, concerning renewable energy have had substantial negative impacts. Federal rules threatening base load power (Green New Deal via the Inflation Reduction Act etc.) has caused rate increases of about 25% across the Intermountain West. If dogmatic ideologues would stay out of our elected PSC's legislated mission the rate structure would improve.

**2.** I recently fought to allow open and transparent meetings for new energy procurements. I /the people of Montana lost. PSC rule mandates such meetings be open, but the law does not so it is ignored. All I can do is keep trying. Some coverage from the press would be nice.

Unlike most departments the PSC is made up of five commissioners each with one vote. So cannot, and should not, try to force compliance with the new behavior guidelines. That job belongs to the voters.

**3.** Some want to join a Regional Transmission Organization (RTO). I am open but lukewarm to this as the other member states face the same challenges we do. And they can out vote Montana in

cost allocations.

When on the Commission I was the OMS agent so if this is the path chosen I shall re-assume that position and mitigate start up issues.

I prefer, and have started soliciting support for, having NWE customers form a member owned co-op and purchase energy from the BPA. Possible down sides have yet to surface.

**4.** Experience.

- 2001 energy advisor to Speaker of the House and Governor. Wrote HB 640 which stopped Montana Power from crushing Mt with deregulated pricing.
- Elected to PSC and Vice Chairmanship in 2004 and oversaw NWE's bankruptcy and re-integration of generation and transmission assets.
- Re-elected to PSC and Vice Chairmanship 2008 and repealed new formula that raised rates for lower and middle income rate-payers.
- Served on Senate Energy Committee 2020-2024. Appointed to the Consumer Council oversight committee to assure the Consumer Council has the resources to properly represent consumers before the PSC on rate questions.

**JON TESTER**

*votes with **Biden-Tester-Harris***

**95% of the time**

**Reject  
Jon Tester  
on Nov. 5th**

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## Susan Bilo – D



**Age:** 62

**Home:** Bozeman

**Family:** Married, and I belong to a dog.

**Occupation:** Montana State University—Gallatin College Instructor

**Education:** B.S. and M.S. from Colorado State University

**Contact information for voters:** E-mail: SusanBilo4PSCDist2@gmail.com; Website: www.Bilo4PSC.com

**1.** Multiple ways that include:

a. Ensuring more affordable energy options are compared and given fair consideration. Today's utility-scale solar and wind with battery storage power plants are cost-competitive/cheaper than fossil fuel-powered plants. Montana has world class wind, but other utilities such as Puget Sound are using it more than we are to keep bills low and meet clean energy goals.

b. Leading the effort to expand our constrained electric grid to allow the import of cheaper electricity when needed. Idaho Power invests in solar and wind power plants and expanded the grid so it can buy cheap windgenerated electricity from states like Wyoming. These strategies keep their average electric bills at \$65/month versus Northwestern Energy's \$113/month (based on 765 kwh use/month).

c. Introducing competition for Montana's two investor-owned utilities by developing fair and reasonable contract terms for outside businesses that want to build power plants in Montana.

d. Overseeing development of a long-range energy plan that proactively addresses the levelized cost of energy as well as the external costs on our environment and society.

e. Last, by directing the utilities to expand and better market efficiency programs that help Montanans reduce electricity and natural gas use.

**2.** These issues resulted in an Executive Director being hired to oversee operations and manage misconduct. There should be a dock in pay for not showing up for meetings and hearings and dismissal for breaking the law and mis-use of taxpayer dollars. Transparency and access to



utility plans and PSC decision-making information is critical: Laurel citizens were not told about plans for Northwestern Energy's new natural gas plant. That would not have happened on my watch! I would have made sure Montanans – especially in Laurel – were informed and invited to public meetings to learn more and provide input. I will work with PSC staff to proactively inform Montanans about all major energy decisions and plans.

**3.** There is a repeated myth that only fossil fuels plants are reliable. Colstrip shut down during Montana's recent extreme cold snap, and in Texas several years ago, wind turbines and a natural gas plant stopped working during extreme cold. All energy facilities need to be "weatherized" for extreme weather events that are occurring more frequently due to climate change. Solar energy systems work well in cold climates and wind turbines provide electricity at America's McMurdo Research Station in Antarctica. And, battery storage makes these systems reliable because the electricity is available 24/7 upon demand when needed. These reliable systems are also more affordable (and cleaner) than fossil fuel plants. Lazard – a respected global financial and leading financial advisory and asset management firm – creates yearly reports on the unsubsidized costs of all energy. Its analysis indicates "significant cost declines for utility-scale renewable energy generation technologies that are driven by multiple factors including decreasing capital costs and improved technologies."

The PSC should have directed Northwestern Energy to build a new wind or solar farm and renew their Judith Gap wind contract instead of investing in the Laurel natural gas plant and looking to acquire additional Colstrip shares. The excuses for not investing in renewable energy technologies are old and worn out!

**4.** The majority of the PSC's work centers around energy, and I have

over 25 years of energy program, project, and policy experience. I was an energy specialist for a state energy office, the U.S. Department of Energy, and the National Renewable Energy Laboratory. As an instructor, I research and teach fact-based energy information to students in my Montana State University—Gallatin College classes. I have also taught energy courses for the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. Once elected, I will step back from teaching and be fully dedicated to the job. I have served on advisory boards and committees providing guidance on long-range plans. Energy is my chosen profession, and my knowledge and experience will help me provide a fresh perspective and hit the ground running.

## PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION DISTRICT 3

### Leonard Williams – D



**Age:** 67

**Home:** Butte America

**Family:** Two children

**Occupation:** Inside Wireman/retired

**Education:** Graduate Twin Falls High School; Idaho State Electrical

Apprenticeship Training

**Contact information for voters:**

Leonard (Lenny) Williams, PO BOX 4221, Butte MT 59702; 406-565-2498; Lenny4pscdistrict3@gmail.com; Lenny for PSC District #3 Mt.; www.lennyforpsc.org

**1.** Montanans today are faced with the challenge of high energy, property tax, and cost of living increases. The Public Service Commission has the task of balance the proposed rate increase with the demand of energy supply and the opportunity for the provider to maintain

a profit and provide a steady state of flow to the captive consumer meaning that the rate of demand and energy production is maintained at an equal rate.

As we move into a more neutral carbon-based energy profile investments should reflect the technologies afforded to us today. Because the base of some of the costs is dependent on supply and demand we could reduce the amount of consumption.

**2.** The Montana's Public Service Commission has recently come under the watchful eye of a Legislative audit revealing the "commission misconduct and management issues". More recently incidents of finger pointing at staff and regulated bodies over the greatest rate hike in the Treasure States history along with a break in protocol.

The recent adoption of a formal Code of Conduct for the Commission and management staff seems not to have gained the trust of the electorate.

The creation of an oversight board consisting of interested parties would also be a conduit for staff to voice concerns over what may seem like their research falling on deaf ears.

**3.** As Montana faces challenges in energy production with growth the and the advent of the evectional loss of production at the Colstrip facility, how can the PSC help create a bright future in energy production in the Treasure State?

Fortunately, Montana has the ability to move to a more substantiable renewable energy profile. Bold ideas are needed to source new energy production to assure it maintains its mandate to balance cost to the consumer and profit for the for supplier. The question remains on how the PSC deals with creating a new path in the transformation of Colstrip itself and assure citizens and Tribal Nations a place and a future in their communities.

**4.** The qualification that I posses to add benefit to the Public Service Commission District 3 are over 30 years in the electrical trade, multilabel aspects in construction of wind, hydro generation and power distribution centers.

As a Journeyman Wireman and proud member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, it has afforded me with many opportunities to educate myself not only skilled labor but to serve as a delegate in Central Labor Councils the Executive Board and other organizations with a diverse composition. From collective bargaining and collaboration with the goal to find consensus in aspects that affect lives.

## PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION DISTRICT 4

### Elena Evans – I



**Age:** 39

**Home:** Missoula

**Family:** Husband, Tim; two kids ages 4 and 6

**Occupation:** Environmental Health Manager, Missoula County

**Education:** Master's Degree in Geology, University of Montana

#### Contact information for voters:

[www.ElenaForMontana.com](http://www.ElenaForMontana.com),  
[info@elenaformt.com](mailto:info@elenaformt.com)

**1.** My family is one of many Montana families that moved to budget billing after the PSC approved the 28% rate increase for Northwestern Energy last year. The PSC is legally obligated to ensure ratepayers have “reliable, sustainable, and affordable” power, and the PSC can force NorthWestern to work harder to meet that standard when it submits requests for new rate increases or requests to purchase new power sources, for example. The PSC can also require utilities to expand programs to assist low-income customers.

**2.** First, I would defeat Jennifer Fielder (current VP of the PSC) in this election. She has a long history of misconduct, corruption, and scandal. Everywhere she goes, lawsuits follow.

Second, I would implement the legislative audit's recommendations to the letter. I would create a code of conduct for all commissioners, reclassify department staff so they aren't supervised by politicians, and empower nonpartisan staff to do their jobs without political interference. I'm a true Independent. I firmly believe our government should be run by people rather than political parties. Transparency would be my #1 goal.

**3.** The PSC is required to ensure reliable power, but the extremely old power plants that provide most of our energy frequently shut down during major cold snaps causing huge cost increases that NorthWestern passes on to customers.

The PSC is required to ensure affordable power, but they aren't requiring NorthWestern to invest in forward-thinking energy like major utilities in other states, which will save customers money in the long run.

The PSC is required to ensure



sustainable power, but our power plants aren't cutting it. It's time to invest in cutting edge technology to cut costs for consumers.

**4.** I'm not a Democrat or a Republican. I'm a working mom with two kids. As a lifelong public servant, I've always stressed professional conduct, honesty, and transparency. I'm a trained geologist, a water quality expert, and the former Director of the Montana Association of Conservation Districts. I know how to build a budget and stick to it. I always read the fine print.

I've also completed the Incident Command System and received my Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response certification. For years, I've demonstrated an ability to simplify complex systems, interpret regulations, and understand how small details impact real people.



### Jennifer Fielder – R



**Age:** 58

**Home:** Thompson Falls

**Family:** Married 25 years to Paul Fielder. Two grown children and five grandchildren.

**Occupation:** Public Service Commissioner

**Education:** Bachelor of Science; Associate of Applied Science; Associate of Arts and Sciences.

**Contact information for voters:** Web: [www.JenniferFielder.com](http://www.JenniferFielder.com) (all contact info is available on this website as well as a messaging portal)

than 37 other states. We also approved a new garbage company in Missoula County which offers considerably lower prices. I will continue working diligently to lower costs while keeping service quality up.

**2.** Before I joined the Commission in 2021, the agency was in turmoil. I immediately put my administrative skills to work and led vital Strategic Planning, Software Modernization, and Internal Policy Reforms – all of which resulted in higher standards of conduct, order, and performance throughout the agency. In 2023, I was unanimously elected by fellow Commissioners as the Commission Vice President and later that year the PSC received its best state fiscal audit in a decade. We also scored 100% on our federal audits the last 3 years in a row. The current Commission and staff are outstanding.

**3.** We are working very hard with the utilities and the legislature on Integrated Resource Planning to ensure adequate utility supplies will be available when Montanans need them now and in the future. At the root of this is to step up energy efficiency measures, accurately forecast energy demand, and allow

## EA (Andy) Johnson

### Republican - House District 72

Tech Grad, BS & MS Geol. Engineering  
Mineral Development, Navy Flyer,  
Penned Conservative Corner in  
Butte Weekly for 1.5 Years.



**Butte First, Montana Second, America Third**  
**Smaller government yields greater freedom**  
**Fund Necessities first, then niceties**  
**Hand ups (jobs), before hand outs**  
**Resource development creates wealth & jobs**  
**Importing resources spends wealth with no jobs**  
**Terminating a pregnancy is a woman's decision**  
**Terminating one's life is a personal decision**  
**Elections are not meant to be fair and balanced,**  
**They are meant to be honest, with integrity.**

*Paid for by: Andy Johnson for HD 72, Box 3547, Butte, MT 59701*

Montana utilities to maintain and develop enough energy to meet consumer demand. If we are short on energy supply in Montana, our utilities are forced to enter bidding wars to obtain energy from other states, and this can be very expensive especially during extreme cold weather when demand is highest.

**4.** Four years Montana Public Service Commissioner; two years as Vice President of the Montana Public Service Commission; eight years Montana State Senate. Prior to that, I gained over 20 years of professional planning, design, and project management experience which involved the types of industries regulated by the PSC – including railways, pipelines, power plants, telecommunications, water works, solid waste management, and federal energy regulatory proceedings. I completed NARUC Utility Rate School. My formal education includes a Bachelor of Science with Magna Cum Laude honors, an Associate in Arts & Sciences with President's Medal Award, and an Associate in Applied Science.

## STATE AUDITOR

### James Brown – R



**Age:** 53

**Home:** Dillon

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

**Occupation:** Lawyer/public servant

**Education:** Beaverhead

County High School; BA, University of Montana; LLM in tax law from the University of Washington; Montana insurance producer's license.

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

**1.** Protecting Montana's insurance and securities customers is the most important duty of the State Auditor. For the last 20 years, I have, first as a private practice attorney, and second as President of the Montana Public Service Commission, worked to defend the interests of consumers and investors and will continue to do so in this key position.

The Auditor is also tasked with administering Montana laws to ensure the state maintains a healthy and thriving business environment. The majority of businesses in Montana are small businesses. And, as a small business



owner and employer myself, I pledge to keep Montana open for business through common sense regulation, fair enforcement of the law, and meaningful consumer education and outreach.

**2.** I have zero tolerance for those who violate the law or attempt to financially abuse seniors and other vulnerable groups. The Auditor's Office is, among other things, a law enforcement agency. Having been an attorney and an officer of the court, I will zealously defend all Montanans, especially our vulnerable seniors, from the fraudsters and scammers who would seek to prey on them, particularly against those who use Artificial Intelligence to target the Treasure State's most vulnerable populations. This is a situation that I will address immediately upon being sworn in office as Montana's next Auditor.

**3.** I grew up in and was educated in rural Montana. I have experienced firsthand how tough it can be for hard working Montanans living outside of Helena to access state resources. Consequently, among my top priorities as Montana's State Auditor will be to bring government services into your local community by holding education and outreach sessions in all parts of the Treasure State - from Ekalaka to Eureka. This effort will include holding public consumer and business education forums in communities around the State, namely in those underserved areas of the state such as native American reservations and eastern Montana.

**4.** Having grown up Dillon, a small Montana community, I understand the importance of protecting access to quality health care services for all Montanans. This includes the need to ensure small independent pharmacies have a level regulatory playing field in which to compete against chain retailers. Montana's legislature recently passed legislation to give the Auditor's office more oversight of pharmacy benefit managers. However, the Legislature should consider taking additional action to protect consumers

and make prescription drugs more affordable, including investigating how PBMs fit into a national drug pricing structure and highly concentrated health care markets and providing greater transparency to PBM practices.

**5.** Montana's Constitution clearly denotes that it is the primary job of the land board to maximize revenue generated from school trust lands for use by Montana's public schools. While, in 2023, State Trust Lands produced roughly \$54 million for Montana's K-12 public schools, we can do better for Montana's children by generating more revenue through proper stewardship of state trust properties. Thus, from day one as a member of the land board, I will work to ensure each project is generating sufficient revenue to educate Montana's kids as required while ensuring the public interest is served by protecting access to public lands for all Montanans.



### John Repke – D

**Age:** 67

**Home:** Whitefish

**Family:** Single (widowed in 2023 after 43 years of marriage); father of three, grandfather of three (all Montana residents)

**Occupation:** Retired

after a 4-decade career in private business as a finance executive involved in corporate finance, insurance, securities, strategy, and general management.

**Education:** BS in Finance, Ohio State University; MBA in Finance, University of Denver

**Contact information for voters:** www.repkeformontana.com

**1.** The Auditor's job is to “protect Montana insurance consumers”. Advocacy

and outreach are the core responsibilities and will be my top priorities.

I support continuing Montana's current Medicaid Expansion beyond 2025, when it is set to expire. All Montanans are impacted when some of us don't have health insurance.

Increased frequency and severity of catastrophic climate events is roiling Montana's home insurance market. I will research best practices addressing this critical issue and find solutions that work for Montana.

I am committed to transparency in rates and coverages in all lines of insurance, along with a competitive insurance market, to benefit Montana consumers.

**2.** I will focus the investigatory efforts on protecting Montana consumers from fraudulent security schemes, deceptive online scams and insurance fraud. I will partner with other state and federal agencies to leverage the resources of the office and broaden the investigative reach.

**3.** The resources of the office are vital to the protection of Montana insurance consumers – and becoming increasingly important in the current insurance market. Unfortunately, they are under-utilized. I will increase awareness of the services by requiring insurance companies to notify their customers that the office is available to answer questions and mediate disputes that cannot be resolved directly with their insurance company. I will also work to promote the fraud protection services of the office through partnerships with phone, text, and email providers.

**4.** Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBMs) play a complicated role in the delivery of pharmaceutical drugs to insured patients across the country. My plan is to work closely with our federal delegation to manage drug costs, including the costs of PBM services. Specifically in Montana, I will work to require more transparency around PBM costs and PBM decision making around approval of drug coverages. The office needs to enforce SB395 from the 2021 session.

**5.** Montana's state trust lands were established for the purpose of generating funding for K-12 education. That's an important mission and with my four-decade background in finance, I will bring a higher level of financial scrutiny to the leasing decisions that generate that funding. I will also ensure that our state lands are managed for the long-term benefit of all Montanans, and I will ensure that Montanans maintain access to our public lands for hunting, fishing, hiking, and other recreation.



***“TRANSPARENCY AND AN OPEN-DOOR POLICY AS YOUR COUNTY ATTORNEY, KEEPING THE PEOPLE OF SILVER BOW COUNTY WELL-INFORMED AND ACTIVELY INVOLVED.”***

***MATT ENROOTH***

# **VOTE MATT ENROOTH**

**Butte-Silver Bow County Attorney**



- SIXTH GENERATION MONTANAN
- EXCEPTIONAL LEADERSHIP
- A 10-YEAR PROVEN TRACK RECORD PURSING JUSTICE FOR ALL
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**PAID FOR BY MATT ENROOTH FOR COUNTY ATTORNEY.  
P.O. BOX 3782, BUTTE, MONTANA 59702. ELTON “MICK” RINGSAK, TREASURER**

## U.S. REPRESENTATIVE 1ST CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

### Monica Tranel – D



**Age:** 58

**Home:** Montana

**Family:** Married with three daughters.

**Occupation:** Two-time Olympian, attorney focusing on land use, water rights, regulatory work, and representing

clients across Montana.

**Education:** Billings Central Catholic High School, Gonzaga University, Law Degree from Rutgers University-Camden

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

**1.** Montana must lead the energy transition. I support two existing laws:

- The Farm Bill, investing in Montana's agriculture, lands, and forests
- The Infrastructure and Inflation Reduction Act, funding forest management, water storage, and energy investment, including projects like St. Mary's Canal and the bridge in Noxon.

I would introduce my own bills that focus on:

- Enhance grid systems: protect our energy supply and keep our energy infrastructure sustainable, reliable, and secure.
- Housing: making sure Montanans are safe and have a place to live. I have a housing plan that will keep Montana affordable so all our families can live here.

**2.** Becoming a parent is a private decision that we must be free to make without interference from the government. No one needs to abandon deeply held beliefs, but the decision about having a child is not the government's to make, and certainly not Ryan Zinke's. I support privacy and freedom to decide whether we become parents, without government intrusion.

Consequences of extremism that Zinke supported are happening in Idaho, where the standard of care for a life-threatening miscarriage is to transport out of state, at tremendous risk. No doctor should face either saving a mother's life or going to jail.

**3.** For all of us who run households, we balance our budgets by increasing income and reducing unnecessary spending.



That is exactly what our country must do. We must ensure everyone pays their share and no one gets a free ride. We can reduce the national debt by making sure that corporate tax rates are fair and that enough money is coming in to cover the essential costs of government, defense, education, and infrastructure. Simultaneously, we need to hold those on the spending side accountable. We need to monitor government spending, eliminate waste and fraud, and remove any abuse of the system.

**4.** I have a plan to address the high costs of housing. The federal government can partner with local government, public and private sectors to make Montana a place families can afford. My plan is: 1) assess the data to meet the problem; 2) hold bad actors accountable, making sure houses are for people to live in, not assets in an investment portfolio; and, 3) address the affordability gap for the missing middle.

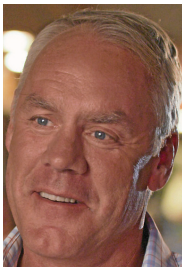
We can promote Community Land Trusts, keep private equity from buying up trailer parks, and make sure rent isn't a function of algorithms set by Wall Street investors.

**5.** Yes. The United States must stand with our democratic allies. Providing aid to Ukraine and Israel aligns with our values and strategic interests. We must also address the humanitarian crisis. While Israel must have the ability to defend itself, especially with respect to Iran and its proxies, we must have a two-state solution to rebuild Gaza and to give the Palestinians security, self-determination, and dignity.

In addition, it's critical that we ensure strong oversight and accountability for how taxpayer dollars are used, guaranteeing that our aid is effectively supporting the mission and the people it is intended to help.



### Ryan Zinke – R



**Age:** 62

**Home:** Whitefish

**Family:** Wife: Lolita Zinke; sons: Wolfgang and Konrad Zinke; daughter: Jennifer

**Occupation:** United States Congressman for Montana's First Congressional District

**Education:** Bachelor of Science in Geology: University of Oregon, Master's

in Business Administration: National University; Master's of Science in Global Leadership: University of San Diego

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

**1.** Montana also saw a cold snap with temperatures 20-to 60-degrees below zero last winter. Whether it's 90 and sunny or 60-below zero Montanans need a reliable and affordable power grid that can only be achieved by utilizing Montana's diverse energy resources. That means not following the Left's plan to tear down dams, that means letting the Crow Tribe manage their resources and mine their coal, and harnessing all the other energy God has put under our feet and in our skies. As Secretary of the Interior and as Congressman I built a record of responsible energy development that led to record low fuel and power prices and led to record safety for on and offshore production. We became a net exporter of energy and used that energy to help our friends and keep our adversaries in line. We are the greatest country in the world. Nobody can out-innovate or out-produce the US unless radical environmentalists like environmental lawyer Monica Tranel are pulling the strings. Her plan to ban fossil fuels and force a transition to all electric vehicles would literally leave Montanans to freeze.

**2.** I do not support a federal abortion ban and regardless of what my opponent says, it's never been the case. She will lie and tell you what her DC strategists told her will win this race, but at the end of the day my record and my word is consistent. I personally am pro-life but understand restrictions should be put in place after the first trimester and that there are heartbreaking situations where exceptions should be made available such as rape, incest and to protect the life of the mother. Monica Tranel on the other hand supports elective abortions up until the moment of birth and would not require emergency care for a baby who survives an abortion. Absolutely unthinkable. She will tell you that doesn't happen –without denying it's her position—and frankly that's just incorrect. Practically speaking, I believe the best way to reduce abortions is to make birth control widely available and affordable so those difficult situations aren't even faced in the first place. On the other end of the family planning issue, IVF makes the miracle of a family possible and should remain an option for parents.

**3.** It's simple: You take out a loan you pay it back. You don't spend what you

don't have. Two years of Democrat control in DC led to big government spending, trillions of dollars added to the debt, and record high interest rates and inflation. Bills like the slyly-named "Inflation Reduction Act" which Monica Tranel said was "awesome" and that she would vote for, increased federal spending by trillions and made bogus investments in Chinese technologies at the expense of America. As a member of the House Appropriations Committee I've voted to cut billions of dollars from federal budgets while funding core government functions and making investments in Montana where it counts the most. I cut wasteful and woke programs at the Departments of Defense, Education and Agriculture and increased funding at Homeland Security and Veterans Affairs, And just as important as cutting spending is making sure Montana gets its fair share of tax dollars back. As a committee member I secured more than \$35 million for Western Montana roads, bridges, senior homes and a youth center in Browning. Looking to fiscal year 2025, I have funding pending for more than \$25,000,000 in water systems to support more housing, and additional funding for law enforcement

and emergency services across the district. Not all government spending is bad spending so its important to root out the garbage and frivolity and make investments in core functions.

**4.** Household finances are tight right now and a lot of young people feel like the American Dream of home ownership is unrealistic. This is due to high inflation for gas, groceries and rent or high interest rates and building materials costs if the want to buy or build. Even a family of 3 with two good jobs can't make ends meet in this housing crisis. The answer is not more government housing, it's making the American Dream affordable again. I truly believe that folks who work in the community should be able to live there, which is why my family has provided affordable rental homes in Whitefish for the better part of 20 years. In Congress, I sponsored the HELPER Act to establish a new home loan program under the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) to make homeownership more accessible to K-12 school teachers, first responders, law enforcement officers, and other essential public servants by eliminating some of the barriers for first-time homebuyers including high

**VOTE**

**FRANK JOSEPH**

**DISTRICT COURT JUDGE  
SILVER BOW COUNTY**

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[www.JosephforJudgebsb.com](http://www.JosephforJudgebsb.com)

PAID FOR BY JOSEPH FOR JUDGE,  
2801 S MONTANA ST, BUTTE MT, 59701 TREASURER  
HOLLY CARPENTER

down payments and monthly mortgage insurance premiums. Like a lot of you, I grew up in a trailer park. Trailers are quality homes and buyers shouldn't be treated as second rate citizens if they seek federally backed mortgages through USDA, HUD or the VA. For folks who aren't in a position to purchase a home and need a hand up, making sure those programs are viable and Montana gets its fair share is important. I worked with Montana Housing Authority to hold DC accountable and prevent HUD from swiping millions of dollars from Montana's housing aid accounts helping keep hundreds of Montanans in their homes. Lastly, I've taken the time to investigate and invest in the root causes of the housing shortage. It's not my family's little vacation rental as Monica Tranel would lead you to believe. In most towns, like Seeley Lake, Lolo and Lakeside, it's lack of infrastructure to support more building. I worked with County Commissioners and planners to identify four water infrastructure projects for federal funding. Once funded, the projects will build the necessary infrastructure to support additional housing in areas that need it most.

**5.** Israel is our closest ally in the Middle East and is an invaluable partner in maintaining global security. I unequivocally support Israel and the destruction of the Hamas terrorist regime. I strongly oppose sending any humanitarian aid to Palestine until there is a complete and total surrender and the terrorists are rooted out. As such, I voted against the funding bill for Israel because it literally sent billions of dollars to Hamas. Imagine fighting a war only to have your ally funding both you and your opponent. I refuse. On the issue of Ukraine, I have voted no on every Ukraine funding bill. I will not blindly send U.S. tax dollars to fight a foreign war that the President, Department of Defense, or anyone else in charge can't tell me what the plan is. "Defeat Putin" is not a plan, it's a goal but it's not a plan. When I was in Iraq we didn't just put down a piece of paper and say "OK guys the plan is to win, now go". What's the plan, rules of engagement, metrics for success, go-no-go criteria? They have no idea. Congress and the Biden-Harris Administration have sent billions of dollars to Ukraine with zero oversight and zero accountability. Meanwhile we have our own soldiers living in barracks that are little better than slums, veterans dying



while waiting to get health care, and the border being overrun by cartels, criminals and terrorists. A no vote on funding for Ukraine is not a yes vote for Russia, it's a yes vote for putting American interests first.

### SUPREME COURT JUSTICE

#### Katherine Bidegaray



**Age:** 63

**Home:** Sidney

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

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

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

**Contact information for voters:**  
bidegaray@bidegarayformontana.com

**1.** During more than 21 years as a district court judge, my judicial philosophy has centered on fairness, respect, and impartiality, not swayed by partisan interest, public opinion, or fear of criticism. It is rooted in a firm commitment to the rule of law. I approach each case with an open mind, basing decisions on the relevant facts and legal principles, while adhering strictly to the 1972 Montana Constitution, the U.S. Constitution, and established legal precedents and statutes. My opponent describes himself using political terms and attends partisan political events.

**2.** I will continue to work, as I have during 39 years as an attorney and judge, to maintain a fair, impartial, nonpartisan judiciary that upholds the U.S. Constitution, the Montana Constitution, and the rule of law. I will decide issues based on the law and facts, not on

partisan ideology or politics. Montanans are entitled to expect neutrality and impartiality in the judiciary, as underscored by the separation of powers our 1972 Montana Constitution requires. I am not a politician. To maintain public trust and the integrity of our judicial system, I do not participate in partisan political events.

**3.** Briefs and orders in cases appealed to the Montana Supreme Court are available to the public on its website. Oral arguments to the Court are streamed. I would encourage the continuation of these practices. To make the Court more understandable to Montanans, I would emphasize the important role the Montana Supreme Court plays in preserving the rule of law, protecting the individual rights the 1972 Montana Constitution guarantees, and reigning in the other branches of government if they abuse their power. In addition, I would write decisions that are clear, logical, and concise.



## Dan Wilson



**Age:** 60

**Home:** Kalispell

**Family:** Married 28 years to wife, Tia; daughter Live, 22-years-old

**Occupation:** District Court Judge, Flathead County

**Education:** B.A., Penn State, 1987; J.D. University of Minnesota Law School, with honors, 1993

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

**1.** My judicial philosophy is defined by these principles. First, judges must not forecast what their rulings will be in advance. In no other way can Montanans respect the decision of a court as fair and impartial. Second, judges must obey and follow the law and not seek to remake the law in the image of their own beliefs.

Third, judges must interpret and apply the Constitution and all laws according to their plain meaning and original intent.

So many statements have been made during the course of this campaign that I will not attempt to define my opponent's judicial philosophy. Respectfully, I will leave that opportunity for her.

**2.** I will maintain an independent judiciary by following the traditions and standards established by generations of judges before me. That includes the faithful application of the law and legal precedent and respecting the role of our co-equal branches of government.

To preserve the nonpartisan nature of this election, I will run a campaign focused primarily on my own experience and qualifications.

**3.** I will urge my colleagues to conduct more public hearings in cases. Aside from providing greater public exposure to the court's workings, increasing the number of public hearings will offer Montanans an insight into the efforts that go into producing a final decision of the Supreme Court.

# MARGIE O'CONNOR WILLHITE

## for BSB County Superintendent of Schools



Will promote  
educational  
growth and  
improvement  
for Butte-Silver  
Bow families.

Paid for by Margie Willhite for BSB County Superintendent of Schools  
PO Box 186, Butte, MT 59703, Sarah Walton, Treasurer

**SUPREME COURT CHIEF JUSTICE****Cory Swanson****Age:** 47**Home:** Townsend**Family:** Married with two children. My wife Julie is a speech therapist in Townsend.**Occupation:** Broadwater County Attorney, and Colonel in the Montana Army National Guard**Education:** BA in Political Science, Carroll College; Juris Doctor with Honors from UM Law School; Master's Degree in Strategic Studies from US Army War College**Contact information for voters:** swansonforjustice.com; Facebook Page; X Profile

**1.** A judge's job is to correctly interpret the law and apply it to the facts of a case, producing a legal outcome guided by those parameters and not by a personal agenda. If I'm elected to the Montana Supreme Court, I will decide every case in that manner.

My opponent routinely tells people that he will fight for certain rights (while ignoring others), and he will fight against the conservative policies of the elected legislature. That is a judicial activist philosophy that will undermine the fairness of our courts by advancing a personal agenda, not the impartial rule of law.

**2.** Judges ensure an independent judiciary by scrupulously deciding cases on the facts and the law, not politics. The judiciary needs to zealously exercise its authority, but also respect the legislature's Constitutional turf.

I have resisted efforts to turn this campaign into a partisan race by confirming that I have not accepted or solicited endorsement by the Republican Party. My opponent has failed to disclaim support from the national Democratic Party, and has publicly endorsed Jon Tester and Tim Walz. I can assure every future litigant that I will serve as a non-partisan and impartial judge.

**3.** There is a nationwide trend of decreased trust in the courts, which correlates to decreased understanding of how they work. I would like to lead a public outreach effort to bring the courts to the people, and bring the people to the court. That includes expanding upon the



road show that the Supreme Court does a couple of time a year for oral arguments. We should encourage lawyers and judges to help student government, mock trial, or pre-law programs. And it means encouraging access to justice efforts to assist low income persons who need but cannot afford legal representation.

**Jerry Lynch**

democracy together. I'm the only

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

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

**2.** I am a champion of the 1972 Montana State Constitution. At the Montana Supreme Court, as Chief Justice I will ensure that we follow the law as it is written and will be certain that the law is enforced regardless of politics. The judiciary only functions if it is independent and nonpartisan, and ensuring ours remains so will be my north star. As Chief Justice, I will expand trainings for District Judges and employees of the Montana judicial branch to ensure everybody understands the importance of being apolitical and impartial.

**3.** The Montana Constitution guarantees

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

**CLERK OF THE SUPREME COURT****Bowen Greenwood – R****Age:** 52 (53 by election day)**Home:** East Helena**Family:** one sister**Occupation:** Clerk of the Montana Supreme Court**Education:** BA from Georgetown University in 1994.**Contact information for voters:** www.GreenwoodForMontana.com

**1.** I was first elected as a Republican, I'm running for reelection as a Republican, and I will always be a Republican. One crucial element of being a Republican is being fiscally conservative, and that's how I administer the Clerk's office. My coworkers and I spend less money than appropriated every single year. I've cut the travel budget, cut the operations budget, and all while making sure my coworkers are paid well-enough to compensate for the Biden-Harris inflation. My record is one of tightfisted stewardship of taxpayer dollars, and I'd like to continue to govern in that way.

**2.** I've taken three steps to make the court more accessible and understandable to the people of Montana. The first is that every week, we email all the court's opinions to everyone who wants them. Lawyers get that service anyway, now so do the people of Montana.

Second, I've listed high-profile cases

on the Clerk’s office website. The court’s docket isn’t always intuitive for non-attorneys. Listing the big cases on the front page makes it easier.

Finally, my coworkers and I are increasingly digitizing records so people can view them online instead of having to come in in person.



**Erin Farris-Olsen – D**



**Age:** 40

**Home:** Helena

**Family:** Husband Robert Farris-Olsen, sons Tupper (8) and Auggie (6)

**Occupation:** Strategic Public Interest Consultant

**Education:** Bachelor’s Degree, Carroll College; Law, University of Oregon

**Contact information for voters:** erin4montana@gmail.com

**1.** This is a partisan race for a nonpartisan job. The partisanship is

an historic relic and I would support a legislative change to make it nonpartisan. While Justices are nonpartisan to insulate the Court and preserve a separation of powers, that insulation does not exist with current partisan Clerk’s office. Per the Appellate Clerk Ethical Code, Clerks should observe high standards of conduct to protect the integrity, impartiality, and independence of the judiciary in order to avoid even the appearance of bias or impropriety. I would act impartially to give every litigant a fair shake.

**2.** An efficient Court is a more accessible Court and I would take steps to identify and pursue opportunities to increase efficiencies. I would take immediate steps to improve the website, increasing case searchability. I would volunteer to serve on the Access to Justice Commission and improve relationships with the Court Administrator’s Office, State Bar of Montana, and other legal associations. I would make every effort to be welcoming to all and foster a spirit of customer service. My values of fairness and equality inspire my vision for increasing access to justice for all regardless of political affiliation or agenda.

**HOUSE DISTRICT 71**

**Scott DeMarois – D**



**Age:** 52

**Family:** Married, blended family of five kids ages 35, 23, 20, twins at 19.

**Occupation:** Recently retired Fire Captain, Anaconda Fire Department

**Education:** Graduated from Anaconda High School. Four years at Montana Tech studying Chemistry.

**Contact information for voters:**

Preferred Email: sd.for.mt@gmail.com.  
Mailing address: DeMarois for Montanans, PO Box 220, Anaconda, MT 59711

**1.** I would support Medicaid Expansion past 2025. In my 29 years of experience working for the fire department, Medicaid expansion was one of the single greatest helpers of people in Deer Lodge County. We went from many people not insured to at least something to ease the burden of ambulance calls and hospital stays.

Healthcare is very expensive and It was noticed immediately when this measure was passed in Montana.

**2.** Taxes may well be the most complex question that Legislators have to face this session. I am learning more each day, but to have a definitive answer at this point in the process is premature. We can not have knee jerk legislation or initiatives placing caps or restrictions on normal escalations of tax, placing undue burden and hardship on our already fragile infrastructure. We also can not have sky high tax prices, potentially removing people from family homes, ranches, or businesses. I am committed to participating in a common sense plan that helps all Deer Lodge County and Silver Bow County residents.

**3.** Housing is another complex situation facing lifelong Montana residents. Four years ago, we could hire a FireFighter in Anaconda and they could buy an affordable home on the wage we started them at, today, no way that can happen. Over the last few years, housing prices have tripled in our area and the median income of our residents have stagnated or fallen due to up costs in insurance, goods, fuel, etc. I appreciate the dire need for solutions but at this time we



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**OBTAINED MULTIPLE CONVICTIONS FOR THE MOST SERIOUS OF CRIMES**

**DEDICATED TO THE CITIZENS OF BUTTE-SILVER BOW**

**VOTE KELLI JOHNSON**

**FIVEY** 

**BUTTE-SILVER BOW COUNTY ATTORNEY**

**PAID FOR BY KELLI FIVEY FOR COUNTY ATTORNEY, P.O. BOX 4247, BUTTE, MT**

have to see how valuations continue. Are we facing another bubble in the market where we see housing prices drop and buyers are left holding the mortgage on overpriced homes, or will it continue to rise with the popularity of Anaconda/Butte now in Hollywood? I promise a frank and productive conversation with other Lawmakers to create solutions for our residents. Subsidies can work in some situations but will they work with housing? I need to do more research on this topic to have a solid opinion either way.

**4.** Communication with my voters is paramount and my plan is to knock on as many doors as I can before November to hear the issues. I'm not concerned with what party you identify with, only that you are a Montanan and have something to say. The only way we can find solutions is to have conversations with the folks that matter, the people we work for! We need people to get out and vote, it's the individual that makes the difference and I want to be part of that conversation.

## HOUSE DISTRICT 72

### Donavon Hawk – D



**Age:** 43

**Home:** Butte, America

**Occupation:** Public Relations and Marketing Coordinator for Butte YMCA

**Education:** Butte High School, Montana Tech

**Contact information for voters:** P.O. Box 3791 Butte, MT 59702; Phone 406-578-1233

A Montana native, Hawk has been involved in social justice and political activism since 2008, working with SEIU, MT Organizing Project, Alliance for Just Society, and Center for Community Change.

Hawk is currently serving as the National Committee Man for the Montana Democratic Party, as well as serving non-profit organizations Butte Community Council and Butte America Foundation.

He has recently served on House Judiciary, House Health & Human Services, and Ethics Committee as well as serving the last two interim sessions on the Law and Justice Interim Committee.

Before running for public office, Hawk worked over previous legislative cycles keeping Montanans engaged with public



policy affecting their communities.

For 15 years, Hawk has worked on issues such as health care, Medicaid expansion, voting rights, public lands, protecting Social Security, defending unions, and public education.

**Media:** [www.hawk4house.com](http://www.hawk4house.com) and <https://www.facebook.com/HawkforHouse/>



### Andy Johnson – R



**Age:** 79

**Home:** 3470 Quincy St., Butte

**Family:** Married 55 years, two children, one a midwife, the other an electrician

**Occupation:** retired but still active in

Mineral Development

**Education:** Montana Tech, BS and MS, Geological Engineering

**Contact information for voters:** [andyjforbutte@gmail.com](mailto:andyjforbutte@gmail.com); Box 3547, Butte, MT 59701

**1.** No. I believe in hand ups, not hand outs. We all encounter bumps in the road, but we are expected to work our way out. Medicaid should only be granted on an emergency basis for no longer than 3 months, and only once per year. It should never become another pandering for votes agenda.

**2.** The most effective way is to reduce spending. Focus on the other side of the ledger. Can every program be reduced 10%? Is every program really needed at all? Can some programs be combined to reduce overhead? We certainly need to pay our teachers more, but not our school administrators. School sports programs seem disproportionate compared to

academic spending. I would accept a sales tax as long as it is accounted for as a reduction to our income tax based on our gross adjusted income.

**3.** “Affordable” is relative to one’s wealth. Affordable housing is market and location-driven. I don’t think we should be considering new regulations trying to keep housing “affordable”. This has the propensity to cause more harm than good. However, to start reduce property taxes by reducing local, county, and state taxes. Start building up instead of out, especially in Missoula. Taking land out of commodity production becomes a yearly commodity income loss for a one-time real estate gain. Not smart.

**4.** Possible weekly or bi-weekly email to Montana Standard to run on opinion page. Another option is a weekly update to Butte Weekly. I wrote a column to Butte Weekly for over a year and a half and it was well received. It’s all time dependent. If too many bills are submitted then there will be little time to correspond.





## HOUSE DISTRICT 74

### Marc Lee — D



**Age:** 54

**Home:** Butte

**Family:** Single father of three children

**Occupation:** Captain/  
EMT Butte Fire  
Department

**Education:** Graduate of Butte High School / Bachelor of Science Degree at Montana Tech

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

1. It certainly is essential to retain this federal funding that supports the rural healthcare facilities in our State, and the good jobs that come with this funding. Medical costs will always be incurred, but it certainly is better and cheaper if these costs occur for preventive care, rather than emergency room care. As a society, we should want others to have health coverage and to be as healthy as possible. Over 100,000 Montanans were recently dropped from Medicaid because of

paperwork issues—we can and need to do better. Our Governor is certainly no friend to the citizens who need support.

2. In terms of property taxes, the State of Montana had the highest surplus in its history during the last legislative session, yet as homeowners we incurred outrageous property tax increases. The Republican lead Legislature had plenty of time to stop this from happening, now the Governor wants to have a task force to look into the problem they created.

The citizens of Montana certainly bear too large of a portion of the tax burden, and the playing field must be leveled out, and the large corporations must pay their fair share instead of on the backs of the hardworking citizens.

3. I believe investments in the construction trades and rural business development would be the best avenues to address the affordable housing supply and demand issue. New affordable housing can't be built without a growth in the construction trades workforce. No new business development and loss of businesses in our rural communities leave affordable housing vacant across our state. A simple subsidy for affordable housing does very little to address the

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supply and demand issue. I will push for investments in the construction trades and business development in our rural communities.

**4.** I would like to believe that I am very interconnected to my district. I have lived in the district for over 40 years, and this is where my children went to school, where I have coached and volunteered for decades.

Obviously, I will be meeting with the constituents over the next few months to gauge their feelings on various issues. I also hosted a campaign rally back in April, which was held within my district, and I was able to meet with lots of my constituents during this well attended event.

### HOUSE DISTRICT 75

#### Marta Bertoglio – R



Ground Real Estate

**Education:** Graduated from Powell County High School, Deer Lodge, 1991 Graduate of the United States Air Force Academy

**Age:** 55

**Home:** Montana City

**Family:** Husband - Joe Chapman and daughters, Marrin and Cecelia

**Occupation:** Broker/ Owner Uncommon

**Contact information for voters:** Phone 406-438-1772, martaformontana@gmail.com

**1.** I want to review the bill presentation before deciding on my vote. Some taxpayers are reluctant to allocate tax dollars to this program. I am educating myself on the program by attending presentations, so that I may make an informed decision. I am concerned about the impact on rural hospitals and the working poor if Medicaid Expansion is discontinued. Having grown up in a rural community, I understand the significant importance of rural hospitals for these towns.

**2.** One potential option to consider is adjusting the tax multiplier for the

residential tax rate. I look forward to voting for a reasonable solution that puts Montanans first especially those who pay taxes for their primary residence.

**3.** I think that developers are burdened with too many regulations and requirements, which are ultimately passed on to buyers in the form of increased cost and longer wait times for subdivision approval from county/city officials. Perhaps providing tax incentives to developers could help the housing shortage.

**4.** As a business owner, I am not able to travel to all areas in my district as much as I would like, but I am available by phone or email, and I enjoy meeting with people. I attend monthly meetings in Whitehall

and Boulder in person or via Zoom whenever possible. I also plan to visit the communities. As a current business owner, I truly understand the economic stress experienced by myself and my fellow citizens, and I will work hard to find relief for Montanans.



### Nancy Jane Lien – D



**Age:** 72

**Home:** west of Whitehall, Montana

**Family:** four children, Benjamin Griffin of Bozeman; Emily Griffin of Petersborough, New Hampshire; Patrick Griffin, of San Diego,

California and Julia Griffin Sagaion of Seattle; two grandchildren, Eldora Sagaion and Maddox Griffin.

**Occupation:** Contracts Administrator in the oil and gas industry.

**Education:** MEd – Human Development; BS – Government – Montana State University

#### Contact information for voters:

nancyjane@lienformontana.com

**1.** Yes, Medicaid expansion is critical to rural health care. It is also a major source of reimbursement for private medical providers, including mental health and addiction services. Rural counties, such as Jefferson County, rely on satellite offices for care and without Medicaid those services would not be available to the local population.

Medicaid is a program funded largely by federal dollars and the state contribution for expanded services is a small portion of total costs. The impact of not participating would be devastating to the most vulnerable among us. The impact of not participating would be devastating to rural communities.

**2.** The Montana Department of Revenue should apply a lower tax rate percentage to a property's appraised value for properties that are occupied for over six months. I also believe that homeowners who have occupied their homes for over ten (10) years, and/or their heirs, should have property tax rates capped.

I would also offer Montana income taxpayers a tax credit (as opposed to a tax

deduction) for property taxes paid. Most of Montana second homeowners do not pay Montana income tax, they would be ineligible for the property tax credit.

I would also suggest that the classifications for intra-state and inter-state pipelines, rail and transmission lines be re-evaluated and adjusted for revenue losses sustained from the recent tax break gifted by the 2023 Legislature.

**3.** What more can the state government do to ensure that housing is more affordable? Are subsidies appropriate?

The state, and local zoning and planning boards, can assist with expedited permitting and a culture of encouraging housing inventory, without sacrificing community aesthetics, the environment or housing quality. I prefer the use of incentives, rather than subsidies, for affordable units. Developers are encouraged to reserve a portion of total units for cost assisted rents or reduced listing price by claiming housing credits for the capital construction costs.

I would also encourage bringing back the Montana Board of Housing First Time Homebuyer Program and the New Construction Program. These programs

were shelved several years ago; but allowed first time homebuyers a respite from down payment and points fees assessed by traditional lenders, and assisted contract workers and farmers with alternative methods of income qualification. Units or single family homes purchased or constructed with incentives should have minimum occupancy durations, and re-sale priority given to other qualifying buyers.

Providing low cost community sponsored housing for teachers and first responders is also a solution. Incentives for employer paid housing allowances could serve to ease Montana's worker shortages.

**4.** This is the most important question of the survey as it identifies that representation is not exclusive to those that share the same viewpoint. As a Main Street business owner for nearly three decades, the greatest takeaway I have is the importance of customer service. I would consider the confidence of the voters as a catalyst for service to the voters.

I would interact with, and regularly attend, schoolboard, town council and

# TIM SHEEHY

Navy Seal ★ U.S. Senate

★ **END**

Biden-Harris-Tester Inflation

★ **SECURE**

Our Border

★ **STOP**

Democrat Tax Increases

county commission meetings within the district and coordinate and encourage state and local collaboration.

During the legislative session I would write weekly updates for the newspapers serving the communities in the district. I would convert the campaign website, [www.lienformontana.com](http://www.lienformontana.com), to an issues discussion forum and survey tool.

## HOUSE DISTRICT 76

### John Fitzpatrick – R



**Age:** 75

**Home:** Georgetown Lake

**Family:** Married; two adult sons; six grandchildren

**Occupation:** Real estate development and state legislator

**Education:** Graduate of Anaconda High School; BA from University of Montana; MA and PhD from Ohio State University

**Contact information for voters:** John.Fitzpatrick@legmt.gov

**1.** I don't make commitments for or against a bill until I've seen the content. The details are important. I fully recognize the importance of Medicaid expansion to our hospitals, nursing homes and community based service providers. Before proceeding with expansion I want to be sure that it is helping the people who truly need it, that is is not just another government giveaway, and that the program is managed efficiently.

**2.** Property taxes are too high. Property taxes are also the principal method of financing local government and the schools. The governor's Taxation Task Force has issued its recommendations and the fiscal impact of those recommendations is now being assessed. I believe the next legislative session will provide significant tax relief to home owners. But, solving this problem is complex and we need to ensure that the legislature doesn't shift the burden from one group to another. We just also ensure that local government has sufficient funds to operate and uses our tax dollars wisely.

**3.** In order to have affordable housing there needs to be affordable lots. A major problem is the slow and inefficient subdivision process at the Montana Department of Environmental Quality.



Its systems need to be reformed. I am not a fan of direct subsidies but they make sense on a limited basis to create housing for people working at our state institutions. We need to create more public-private partnerships to develop workforce housing and should consider incentives to stimulate more affordable housing in the private sector.

**4.** I welcome communication from my constituents. I want to know their thoughts and concerns. I plan on continuing the communication program that I initiated during the 2023 session which includes a weekly column in the district newspapers apprising the voters of what's happening in the legislature; meeting with local officials, service providers and constituents on at least a weekly basis and campaigning by knocking on doors to meet the electors face to face and visit with them about their concerns.



### Elena Gagliano – L



**Age:** Old enough

**Home:** Philipsburg

**Family:** Yes. Grown up, and moved on

**Occupation:** Retired Bell System Commercial Representative

**Education:** Formal education 14 yrs, self-educated: 30 plus, and still learning

#### Contact information for voters:

ph15016@blackfoot.net

**1.** I believe healthcare decisions should be left to individuals, not government mandates. While Medicaid expansion has provided coverage for many, it has also expanded the government's role in healthcare and placed a long-term financial burden on the state. Instead of continuing Medicaid expansion, I would support reforms that reduce dependency on government programs and empower individuals to seek private, competitive healthcare solutions. I aim to make healthcare more affordable through free-market principles rather than expanding a system that will inevitably require more taxpayer dollars.

**2.** The best way to reduce property taxes is to cut government spending. As the government grows, it needs more revenue, and property owners bear the brunt of that through higher taxes. By reducing the size and scope of

government and prioritizing essential services, we can ease the tax burden on Montanans. I would support legislation that caps property tax increases and audits government programs to ensure taxpayer money is used efficiently. Montanans should have the right to own property without being overtaxed by an ever-growing government.

**3.** The government's role in housing should be limited. Subsidies distort the market and often result in unintended consequences, such as driving up prices. Instead, the state should focus on reducing unnecessary regulations and barriers that drive up housing costs, such as zoning laws and restrictive building codes. By encouraging free-market solutions and allowing more flexibility for developers and homeowners, we can create a more competitive housing market and make homes more affordable without government interference or taxpayer-funded subsidies.

**4.** As a legislator, it's crucial to stay connected with the people I represent. To keep an ongoing dialogue with my constituents, I would regularly hold town hall meetings, maintain an open-door policy, and use multiple communication channels, including email, social media, and direct mail. Listening to their concerns and prioritizing transparency are key to understanding the issues that matter most to the district. My job is to serve the people, and I would actively seek out their input to guide my decisions in the Legislature.

### SENATE DISTRICT 36

### Sara (Palmer) Novak – D



**Age:** 46

**Home:** Anaconda (was born and raised in Butte)

**Family:** Husband Daren, three children (SheaLee 15, Hunter 13 and Gage 13)

**Education:** Butte High Class of 1996, B.S. Education (UM Western), M.Ed Counseling (MSU Northern), Earned my Class 3 Educator Licensure for Administration (MSU Billings and UM)

**Contact information for voters:** Email - novak4sd36@gmail.com; Phone - 406-691-0069

**1.** Yes, absolutely! Medicaid expansion is

vital for the citizens of Montana, especially children. It has helped reduce the rate of uninsured Montanans by 45% since it's implementation after the 2015 legislature passed it.

When patients are insured, they seek preventative treatments, have access to mental health supports/services and overall, it helps to create healthier communities. When patients are not insured it often results in bad debt that is then passed on to the rest of the consumers due to increased costs. Medicaid provides stable funding for providers as well additional funds to treat substance abuse and to help address the state's opioid epidemic.

Most of the population accessing Expanded Medicaid are hardworking individuals in low-income households and children. It allows for folks at or below 133% of the poverty level to access this coverage. Our hospitals, clinics, nursing homes, providers and citizens all have a vested interest in the continuation of Medicaid expansion as it is an economic driver.

I will be supporting the continuation of the current expanded program and would vote to repeal the sunset of the current legislation.

Additionally, when serving during the 2021 session, I supported continuous eligibility for Medicaid. I will continue to fight for that along with the reinstatement of insurance for those who have been unnecessarily removed from the program.

**2.** Addressing the property tax situation will take collaboration and needs to be a priority. I am open to listening to any and all ideas brought forth. Bottom line is that I will support legislation that provides residents relief. We as residential tax payers, should not be covering the burden with our current rates, while the wealthiest citizens and corporations get tax breaks and/or little to no increase in taxes. Everyone needs to pay their fair share. I believe there should be gradual increases over time and/or caps on the increases allowed. Additionally, folks who have been in their homes for many years and are on a fixed income need to be considered. I believe there is a big difference between permanent (specifically long-term home ownership) and rental properties or short-term rentals. Also, unoccupied land and construction phase properties should not be considered equal to properties with improvements and fully constructed/completed homes.

One simple fix in years past, to prevent the giant hikes we have just experienced, includes the legislature and the Governor working collectively to adjust/lower the multiplier. This can and should be addressed during the next session. Additionally, there is needed reform with the appraisal process and the cycle of re-appraising residential properties.

We need long term solutions that benefit EVERY residential taxpayer. We need to equalize things by reversing the unfair shifting of taxes to homeowner. Renters are feeling it as their rates have raised drastically to cover the cost that the owner is experiencing.

**3.** Expanding of programs such as Habitat for Humanity is a great way for working people to get into affordable housing. Offering incentives (for those who meet qualifications) to get into older/fixer-upper homes helps get them into homes and helps improve neighborhoods. Workforce housing opportunities for employers (public and private) to acquire land to build or purchase housing for employees is much needed.

Addressing infrastructure needs along with new growth are also vital. We need to be careful to not compromise health, safety and sustainability out of need/desperation. I also believe multi-family dwellings are an option. Too many communities have a lack of housing in addition to the prices being unattainable.

I believe certain subsidies would be appropriate. I don't believe people are looking for free housing, but lower cost with reasonable rates would allow for young people especially to purchase. Additionally, I would like to see incentives for both the consumer and the business in situations where housing is provided at a low cost for employees.

Again, this is also an issue that will take collaboration and multiple solutions.

**4.** I use a variety of methods. I would continue using local media outlets such as newspaper and radio along with social media to share information or inform the community. During the session, I think it is good to have Town Halls periodically to share information on the session, provide an opportunity for questions and answers and to get feedback and/or information as to how proposed legislation will help or hinder community members. I think face to face meetings are important and give people the opportunity to ask questions. I have enjoyed knocking doors and visiting with people about what their concerns are.



Additionally, I have always met with any group/organization that has invited me in and/or accepted my request to visit with them. I think that is also a good way to reach individuals and inform constituents. When I served during the 2021 session we were in the midst of the pandemic. I am grateful for the opportunity to meet with people in person and feel that nothing is better than that personal interaction.



### Darlean Newman – R

**Age:** 58

**Home:** I live in Wise River, Deer Lodge County

**Family:** I am married to Eric Newman for 38 years; we have two grown children that live in Texas; and we have one grandchild

**Occupation:** I am self-employed as a consultant (since 2004) working with boutique size brokerage firms on securities and regulatory compliance matters.

**Education:** I have a master's degree in business administration, with a concentration in finance from Colorado Technical University. I graduated Cum Laude in December 2023. I served in the United States Marine Corps, and I was honorably discharged. I was stationed in Little Creek, Norfolk, VA in the mid-80s, and that is where I met my husband, Eric.

**Contact information for voters:**

Postal Address: P. O. Box 113,  
Anaconda, MT 59711; Email Address:  
DarleanNewman4MTSD36@gmail.com;  
Cell Phone: 406-660-7311

**1.** I would consider it only with a work requirement as a condition of eligibility, especially for those individuals who are of working ability and age. I also might consider the expansion if the recipients would be required to pay more of their share of the premiums.

**2.** For starters, I do not believe that our property should be reappraised/reassessed every other year; instead, it should be reassessed as development or improvements are made to the property thereby increasing its value. Second, I believe there should be a more simplified way of appealing your tax valuation, especially if you have not made any improvements to your property.

The American public could have never predicted the COVID-19 pandemic, or the fallout. In Montana, we experienced unprecedented growth because of the

pandemic, and the state Department of Revenue could have (and should have) acted quicker to adjust or recalibrate the required reappraisal/reevaluation time period. That could have helped existing homeowners in the state to not have their taxes nearly double based on over estimated unrealized gains in property values. Therefore, property owners should have been allowed to challenge the new value estimates and have their tax bills lowered back to pre-pandemic levels.

Lastly, inflation plays a very important factor in property tax values. Local governments are limited to taxing existing properties to half the rate of inflation. In 2020, the average annual rate of inflation was 1.2%; in 2021 it more than doubled to 4.7%, and in 2022 it nearly doubled again to 8.0%! Although the rate fell back to 4.1% in 2023, you can see how inflation is one factor that dramatically impacts homeowners and property values. Knowing that the excessively high rate of inflation was a result of the pandemic, and a complete lack of federal leadership, the state department of revenue (and the legislature) should have never allowed the recalibration to take place at the higher inflation values.

**3.** I personally do not feel that the state or federal government should be involved in ensuring housing is affordable for Americans, that is up to developers and builders. I believe there are entrepreneurs who can provide affordable options through various means of subsidies or tax-break incentives.

**4.** I have been knocking on doors as a means of meeting voters. I also post updates about my campaign and activities in the community through my social media page, and group pages. I have also been attending county commissioner meetings periodically since last November to better understand the needs of the community. Lastly, I try to attend as many public events as possible so I can meet voters where they are to discuss issues that are of importance to them.

### SENATE DISTRICT 37

#### Derek Harvey – D



**Age:** 35

**Home:** Butte

**Family:** Married for 11 years to my wife Kayla. Together we have two daughters, Josie and Nora.

**Occupation:** Firefighter/EMT with the Butte-Silver Bow Fire Department

**Education:** Graduate of Butte High School, AAS Degree In Fire Rescue from UM- Helena College

**Contact information for voters:** 406-490-5472 (call/text) and harveydj4@gmail.com

**1.** I would absolutely vote for Medicaid expansion past 2025. Thousands of Montana's rely on Medicaid for their healthcare. The viability and strength of our rural hospitals relies on Medicaid. In the past year we have seen thousands of Montanan's Medicaid benefits stripped away by a disastrous redetermination process conducted by our Governor's DPHHS Department. Some of our most vulnerable citizens have been left without basic health coverage after this redetermination process and that needs to be resolved. Our neighbors deserve this coverage and it needs fixed and to have the 2025 sunset removed.

**2.** The tax burden needs to be lifted off of Montana's working class and put back onto large corporations and their billionaire CEO's. We need to stop focusing tax breaks on large corporations just for the sake of bringing their business to the state. Montanan's pride themselves on hard work and supporting small businesses, these are the values our taxes should be based on. During the past session, those in control spent a historic surplus to help the rich get richer. I will continue to fight against this out of state and out of control value set.

**3.** Wages need to match the cost of living. Many Montanans who work fulltime hours still need to seek out assistance to survive and that is wrong. Workers deserve to earn a wage that provide for their basic needs such as housing. Investment in the trades is also needed. In many Montana towns there is not the construction workforce to build affordable housing. I am not against subsidies but feel many don't look at the whole picture. We need to solve all the problems around affordable housing and not just come at it from one angle.

**4.** I strongly believe the best form of communication is meeting face to face. I truly enjoy meeting those that I serve and discussing issues they have. I make it a priority to stay involved in my community. Community events and public outings are a way of life for me. My contact information is very public and I prioritize a prompt response when contacted.

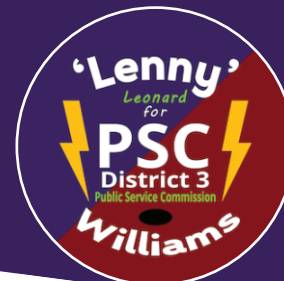


## Lenny Williams for PSC



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**I will work tirelessly to advocate for the citizens in my district to ensure they have access to utilities that are affordable and sustainable. The cornerstone of my campaign is to represent my district while balancing the need for a financially sound utility infrastructure that is capable of providing reliable service.**



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<https://lennyforpsc.org/>



## Jim Kephart – R



**Age:** 69

**Home:** Butte (21 years)

**Occupation:** semi retired landlord and rancher

**Education:** BS, University of Arizona; JD, Dickinson School of Law; LIM-Tax-Temple U.

Grad. Sch. of Law

**Contact information for voters:** j\_kephart@yahoo.com; 406-782-2052

**1.** a) I would continue; b) HUGE economic benefit to Montana for just 10% of our cost c) after strong economy and strong defense (national; law and order state and local), I believe it is our DUTY to do all we can afford for the poor, elderly, AND LOWER INCOME WORKING CLASS

**2.** a) I am something of an expert and I have told the governor that we have the worse property tax system in the nation. Imperative Task Force find best 2-3 in US—and move us there. b) MT DOR Property side has been acting in a “questionable” manner – to a downright ILLEGAL manner – for years. c) .DOR Head BEATTY should be investigated and FIRED. PERIOD. i) He moved AB-26 (request for informal review/conference) from short EZ 1 page to SEVEN DIFFICULT PAGES (took me 45 minutes and I am TRAINED). ii) He put up at least TWO major sets of TOTAL roadblocks to AB 126 submission online. iii) He added NUMEROUS “new” rules. iv) He HID this HUGE problem from Gov. for 2-3 years and then gave false information for public. v) He set up total insurmountable wall of voicemail/ no return calls at MTDOR. vi) He recently announced he was ending his (supposed) “open door policy”....and then made voicemail wall WORSE.

**3.** Governor’s task force’s zoning changes by Governor and Legislature WILL help for many years to come. [BUT, tied up in NIMBY litigation in Bozeman, etc.] More subsidies (especially by state) NOT appropriate. Restore compliance-Fed. Uniform Guidance Rules on ALL federal grants (bring back UGR officer for all counties-ESP./BSB). BSB must cut off fed grant money. PUSH the HUD IG to do his job and investigate low income housing fraud. Strengthen False Claims Act (including longer statute of

limitations) AND hire CFEs (Certified Fraud Examiners) and take away from Legislative Audit Fraud Hotline. Push manufacture and module homes. Take over modular home factory started in Butte (and closed).

**4.** I live and work Uptown. Can give appointment to anyone anytime (can’t find me? GO TO VENUS COFFEE SHOP (they will find me). Will soon reactivate website direct email. Once elected I will use state to snail mail all constituents several times/year minimum. I will use state resources to actually respond to constituent inquiries-not ignore them. I will use MY resources for quarterly (if not monthly) public meetings. During election I’d like to do old fashioned truck/loudspeaker through neighborhoods (I’m too old/bad hips can’t knock on doors anymore-sorry)

## SENATE DISTRICT 38

### Becky Beard – R



**Age:** 64

**Home:** Elliston

**Family:** Fifth generation Montanan, married, one daughter

**Occupation:** Retired Consultant, Beard Environmental &

Technical Assistance LLC

**Education:** BA Carroll College, Helena, 1991, International Relations

**Contact information for voters:** becky4sd38@blackfoot.net, 406-479-3048

**1.** The continued level of government spending here in Montana is paid for using taxpayer dollars. These revenues are finite; therefore, during the 2025 Session we legislators and our constituents have to prioritize the costs for projects, programs, and services to achieve a balanced budget, per our Constitution. Medicaid expansion should be deliberated at length and adjusted as necessary in this context.

**2.** The most effective way to reduce property taxes is to reduce spending. Property tax revenues not only fund our local governments’ essential services and operations, but also our education system. In 2024, 57 percent of these dollars went to education. All parties need to engage in the critical evaluation

of budgets. Reductions, where feasible, of property tax-related expenditures across all programs are essential to keeping costs (and taxes) in check.

**3.** We need to acknowledge the circumstances driving up the cost of housing in Montana. We have a slightly increasing population, but wage growth has not kept pace with skyrocketing property values, most notably in western Montana’s urban areas. We have a limited supply of housing, which also drives up home values, costs and tax rates. During the 2023 Session, a couple of Senate bills passed to ease requirements for building duplexes on home lots, and to require local governments to ease regulations to allow for the construction of secondary housing on shared parcels. Regulations and permitting costs at the local and state levels, along with inflationary costs of building materials, result in increased costs for housing development projects. Without careful forethought, subsidies could add to pressures on inflationary costs. Nonetheless “market incentives,” whether legislated or through the free market, should be explored. Reduced regulatory complexity and more expedient project approvals will also help expedite projects to address the housing shortfall in the near term.

**4.** Looking forward, it will be my continued honor and privilege to serve the voters in our state. I intend to represent my SD 38 neighbors in Powell, Jefferson and Granite Counties, along with individual precincts in Lewis and Clark, Anaconda-Deer Lodge, and Missoula counties during the 69th Legislative Session. I make it a priority to respond to every call and e-mail from the district’s voters, and I can be reached at 406-479-3048, or becky4sd38@blackfoot.net.



### Jeffrey Benson – D



**Age:** 67

**Home:** Boulder, Montana

**Family:** Married, father of two children, two grandchildren

**Occupation:** Rancher, along with my wife we raise Welsh Cobs and Ponies

**Education:** BS in General Science and Education, South Dakota State University. Also received numerous designations and

business degrees.

**Contact information for voters:** PO Box 1291, Boulder, MT, bensonforsenate38@gmail.com

**1.** Yes! Expansion benefits Montana’s small businesses. Employees get affordable health coverage and employers can keep and attract workers. Rural healthcare would be in serious jeopardy if not available and with fewer revenues, many clinics, hospitals and senior centers will close and face an economic breakdown.

Having Medicare Expansion, has transitioned many from emergency room treatment to preventative services. This saves substantial expenses for both the hospital and patient. Costs for Medicaid expansion is born mostly by the Federal Government and Montana’s expense is administrative. The failure to renew this important coverage will actually increase Montana’s costs for Medicaid.

**2.** Montana is besieged by development, people moving to the state and speculation. Working, retired and long-standing residents are caught in the middle and have very few options.

Consideration to implementing access fees to new development, secondary homes, non-residents and vacation rentals and expand assessments of mega mansions instead of reducing these assessments.

Lastly, provide protections for seniors that freeze property taxes until their property is sold. This would protect retirees on a fixed income from losing their homes due to increased property values beyond their control. Counties will be able to adjust the tax basis to the new owners.

**3.** Montana is experiencing astonishing growth of home values and opportunities to find an affordable place for working Montanans are evaporating. We’re facing pricing pressures and it’s difficult for low- and middle-income workers to find places to live near where they work.

Montana can expand outreach to community groups, counties, non-profits, and builders to response to these situations. A better use of the State’s surplus could bankroll development and provide guarantees to assist communities to provide housing for residents. The State could offer tax credits, subsidies for housing, and even develop property to meet the local need.

**4.** My hope is to have an open door of my activities as a Montana State



Senator. Having said this, I would pen updates routinely on social media to keep constituents apprised of the legislative events. Also, I would host town hall meetings to update everyone on what's going on, but more importantly listen to what concerns Montanans have and what keeps them up at night.

As always, the public can contact me through my social media, email, and text. I would welcome personal appointments to hear concerns.

### SENATE DISTRICT 39

#### Bruce Shultz – D



**Age:** 59

**Family:** I have been married to my wife, Wendy Palmer for 33 years. We have a son, Jack who is 30. We have a daughter Georgia, who is 28. Her husband is Rowdy Hansen. They have a daughter Laynie, who is one.

**Occupation:** I am a rancher, but I have had several different careers to go along with ranching. I have been a crop adjuster, forester, life insurance agent and vice-president of National Farmers Organization.

**Education:** I have a BS in Forestry Resource Management from University of Montana.

**Contact information for voters:** phone 406-750-1776, Email tfranch@3rivers.net, Social media: facebook Bruce Shultz SD39

1. Yes I would vote to expand Medicaid past 2025. Health care is vital and should be a fundamental right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Many Montanans need the financial help that this program affords. Without Medicaid, many citizens would not see a health care professional when they first feel sick due to cost. It has been proven that it is way more cost effective to have expanded Medicaid than to have to pay emergency room expenses and to help prevent catastrophic illnesses which are more expensive to treat.

2. Our governor could have made an adjustment to the tax rate, as many governors have done before. I believe this was done to create a push to install a sales tax in Montana. A sales tax would negatively affect year-round residents and only benefit the rich out-of-stators who live here part-time and do not spend

a high percentage of their money in Montana. We need to tax vacation house rentals as commercial properties. This revenue can be used to offset residential taxes. We need to adjust the value of vacation homes, where people live in Montana less than six months.

3. In the last few years our governor and legislature have taken away local control of municipalities which were mandating that new developments be required to have some affordable housing incorporated in the plans. They have sided with developers who only care about profit and not Montanans. We need to allow communities to zone themselves; they know best what the needs of the residents are.

4. The main way of communicating is listening to the concerns of the voters in Senate District 39. I plan on visiting the various counties and towns that SD 39 encompasses. I would work with the local governments, whether city or county to prioritize the needs of the people. I have started a social media page for my candidacy and will use it to also communicate to my district's citizens directly.

5. I have had conversations with my local FWP employees as well as reaching out with public comments to FWP commissioners. Where I live in Judith Basin County, the elk have more than tripled in herd size over the past 30 years. We allow hunters and have participated in damage hunts and shoulder season hunting. Montana needs to incentivize access to public land and expand the Block Management Program. We need to make sure that our stream access laws are not eroded by the legislature. Our governor sued the state over the stream access law; we need to protect our rights.

### SHERIFF (BUTTE)

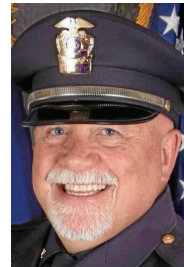
There are two candidates running for sheriff in Butte-Silver Bow County.

Ed Lester was a Butte police detective when he successfully challenged three-term incumbent Sheriff John Walsh in 2012. He was re-elected by a big margin in 2016 and went unchallenged in 2020. He is seeking his fourth term.

Mike Gage moved to Butte eight years ago and is the Montana manager for American National Insurance, a nationwide insurance agency. While living in the Kansas City metropolitan area, Gage was a police officer, SWAT team leader, detective and accident reconstructionist.

Here is a brief bio on each candidate and their answers to questions posed by The Montana Standard

#### Ed Lester



**Age:** 57

**Occupation:** Butte-Silver Bow sheriff

**Education:** Butte-Central High School 1984; attended Montana Tech 1984-1986; Bachelor of science, Montana State University 1988; Graduated Montana Law Enforcement Academy 1989.

#### Q: Is Butte a safe city?

**A:** Butte is a safe city. In looking at the safety ratings of the seven largest cities in Montana, Butte is ranked the safest. Our department polices some of the largest events in the state. The Folk Festival, the Freedom Festival, The Irish Festival, and St. Patrick's Day celebration could not succeed if people were worried about their safety. Our department works well with the organizers of these events and I am very proud of the effort we make to keep these events safe. Butte is a great

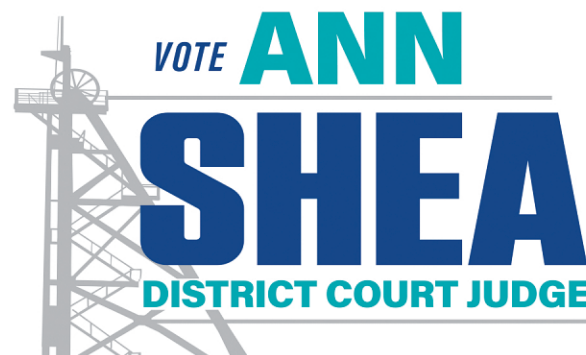
place to live, work and raise a family!

**Q: Everyone says the jail overcrowding in Butte-Silver Bow is a complex, systemic problem. In blunt terms, what needs to change?**

**A:** There is no easy solution to this issue. There are too many inmates in the system and the system cannot adjust quickly enough. There is no doubt the prison system needs more beds, but hard cells are expensive and at least three years out. Until then, our jails are forced to hold state inmates resulting in overcrowding at the local level. In the meantime, we must expand pre-release capacity, provide prevention and treatment for drug addiction and increase our ability to help those with mental health issues. These actions will reduce both arrests and recidivism.

**Q: What are you doing (or would you do) as sheriff to address the problem?**

**A:** Sheriffs around the state are facing the same issues. Jails are overcrowded. I have traveled to Helena with other sheriffs to meet with the Department of Corrections in order to come up with a plan. There may be a way to house more inmates in other states. Pre-release beds must be expanded. Hard cells must



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be added to the prison system. Locally, I am looking to expand our electronic monitoring program to see if more inmates can be safely supervised outside of incarceration. I have also sent inmates to other facilities to reduce our inmate numbers.

**Q: How would you characterize the state of drugs and crime in Butte-Silver Bow right now?**

**A:** Every community in our country has Fentanyl and Methamphetamine. Butte-Silver Bow is no exception. Our officers carry Narcan to reverse the effects of overdoses. Officers and our first responder partners have saved numerous lives with Narcan. An officer from our department is assigned to the Southwest Montana Drug Task Force. We also have a Canine unit assigned to drug enforcement. We have worked with our state and local partners to make arrests and disrupt large drug trafficking organizations in our area and throughout our region. We will continue our aggressive approach to reduce drug trafficking and any related crimes.

**Q: Does Butte-Silver Bow need more police officers? Why or why not?**

**A:** It is not as easy as asking if I “want” more officers. My answer will always be “YES!” The question is, “Can we deliver quality law enforcement with the staff we have?” Currently, with a full staff, I believe we can deliver effective law enforcement. As our community grows, the number of personnel must grow with it ... not just officers, but dispatch and detention staff as well. In recent times, our citizens have been overburdened with taxes because of actions at the state level. As your sheriff, I have to keep that in mind when asking for more personnel.



**Mike Gage**



**Age:** 52

**Occupation:** Agent with American National Insurance

**Education:** Graduate Paolo High School in Kansas. Earned BA in Business Management and Human Relations

from MidAmerica Nazarene University.

**Q: Is Butte a safe city?**

**A:** Overall, Butte is a safe city, but recent trends are concerning. Drug use and drug-related crimes have surged in recent years, with little effective

intervention. Local businesses are compelled to lock their doors during business hours due to disruptions caused by individuals under the influence. Daily thefts driven by drug habits are a significant issue. Addressing this crisis requires a focused effort to curb the availability of drugs in Butte and improve safety for residents and businesses alike.

**Q: Everyone says the jail overcrowding in Butte-Silver Bow is a complex, systemic problem. In blunt terms, what needs to change?**

**A:** To solve jail overcrowding in Butte-Silver Bow, we need to focus on reducing pretrial detention, offering more diversion programs for non-violent offenders, and improving mental health and addiction services. Expanding probation, parole and reentry programs can help manage inmate populations. Addressing the underlying causes of crime, like poverty and substance abuse, is crucial. Additionally, speeding up court processes and reducing reliance on incarceration for minor offenses would relieve pressure on the system. Ultimately, collaboration between law enforcement, courts and social services is key to creating long-term solutions.

**Q: What are you doing (or would you do) as sheriff to address the problem?**

**A:** As sheriff, I would focus on reducing the jail population by expanding alternatives to incarceration, such as pretrial diversion and bail reform for non-violent offenders. I'd work closely with local courts to speed up case processing and reduce unnecessary pretrial detention. Collaborating with mental health and addiction services would be a priority, ensuring those with substance use disorders or mental health issues get treatment, not jail time. I'd also enhance reentry programs to lower recidivism and create partnerships with community organizations to address root causes like homelessness, addiction and poverty that lead to repeated arrests.

**Q: How would you characterize the state of drugs and crime in Butte-Silver Bow right now?**

**A:** The drug situation in Butte-Silver Bow is critical, with cartel-linked drug houses openly operating within city limits. Despite widespread awareness, no narcotics detectives are currently assigned, leaving these operations unchecked. This has led to a rise in weekly overdoses and increased theft across the community. As sheriff, my focus would be on dismantling these drug houses,

assigning dedicated narcotics detectives, and collaborating with state and federal agencies to eliminate drug trafficking. We must also strengthen community outreach and addiction treatment to address the root causes and help those impacted by substance abuse.

**Q: Does Butte-Silver Bow need more police officers? Why or why not?**

**A:** Butte-Silver Bow first needs to reach its currently budgeted staffing levels before considering additional officers. Once fully staffed, we can allocate officers to address critical needs, such as narcotics investigations, mental health crises and property crime. Ensuring proper distribution of resources will allow us to tackle urgent issues like drug trafficking and theft more effectively. Before adding more officers, we must optimize our current force, ensuring specialized units are in place to address the community's most pressing challenges.

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE IN BUTTE-SILVER BOW COUNTY**

J.P. Gallagher was Butte-Silver Bow's parks director when he successfully ran for chief executive in 2020, defeating incumbent Dave Palmer. Bill Foley is a longtime sportswriter and columnist in Butte who currently produces a podcast about the Mining City and its people.

Here is some brief bio information on each candidate and their answers to questions posed by The Montana Standard.

**J.P. Gallagher**



**Age:** 58

**Occupation:** Chief Executive of Butte-Silver Bow County

**Education:** Graduate Butte Central High School 1984; Served in U.S. Navy 1984-1987; Bachelor of Science

in Education from the University of Montana-Western in 1992; Master's degree in education from Graceland University in 2008; Master's certification in School Administrative Leadership from Montana State University in 2011.

**Q: Almost every politician at every level in every place promises transparency if elected. Make a case on why there is or isn't transparency in Butte-Silver Bow government?**

**A:** As the Chief Executive of Butte-Silver Bow, I stand firmly behind our commitment to transparency. The Chief Executive, as an elected official, represents the community in numerous meetings, some of which may not be open to the public. In the case of Butte-Silver Bow government, there is a dedicated Government Website that provides direct links to budgetary information, meetings and agendas, city-county services, reports, and planning documents. Additionally, public meetings and hearings are held to discuss and decide on local matters, further promoting transparency. The availability of these resources indicates a commitment to transparency in the Butte-Silver Bow government, allowing citizens to stay informed and engaged with the governance of their community.

**Q: Many outsiders who know little about Butte know about the Berkeley Pit. It and other sites here will require water treatment in perpetuity. Long after Superfund remediation is complete, Butte will be stuck with stigma that likely affects economic development. How can you as a chief executive mitigate this reputation for contamination?**

**A:** In addressing Butte's environmental concerns, particularly the Berkeley Pit's notoriety, it's essential to clarify that Butte-Silver Bow's potable and industrial water supplies are sourced independently from the pit. As the Chief Executive, it is imperative to ensure the public is accurately informed about the ongoing water treatment initiatives and the robust safety protocols in place. Collaborating with local businesses, stakeholders, and the media is vital to showcase Butte's dedication to environmental care and its economic vitality. Concentrating on these efforts will help transform Butte's image, promoting a positive narrative that supports sustainable economic development.

**Q: Many people in Butte believe there is a good-ol'-boy network within county government that includes its jobs. For many years, almost all hires for its top jobs are from within. Why should anyone outside of county government or Montana bother applying for a top county job here?**

**A:** Butte-Silver Bow boasts a skilled local workforce, which often fulfills our job openings. However, we ensure a fair and open hiring process by posting positions nationally and considering candidates from outside the local

government. While there may be concerns about insular hiring practices, our online application system and the Human Resources Department's commitment to professional and reliable recruitment services demonstrate our openness to hiring qualified individuals from any location, provided they meet the job specifications and are eager to contribute to the Butte-Silver Bow community.

**Q: There is plenty of blame cast about for high inflation, high property taxes and other economic hardships, but unlike businesses and families that make cuts in jobs or spending at such times, none of that seems to ever be considered within local government. Why is that and should that change?**

**A:** Under my leadership as Chief Executive of Butte-Silver Bow, we've consistently reduced the number of mills levied each year, easing the tax burden on our citizens. Despite a rising overall budget, we've strategically utilized grants to cover costs that would otherwise be the responsibility of local taxpayers. This fiscal approach ensures essential services are maintained without exacerbating economic challenges, striking a balance between immediate community needs and long-term financial health.

**Q: The county has given buildings or tax dollars or other favors to projects like Praxis, 40 East Broadway and others in exchange for big promises and plans that have yet to really materialize. How would you address that and should it include local claw-backs?**

**A:** In addressing the commitments to ongoing projects such as Praxis and 40 East Broadway, initiated prior to my tenure as Chief Executive, it's essential to recognize that these projects are still active, with dedicated teams working towards their completion. For upcoming initiatives, I recommend a strategy centered on accountability and community involvement. This strategy would involve establishing explicit benchmarks and timelines for deliverables, as well as implementing local claw-back provisions to protect investments. Moreover, engaging community stakeholders in decision-making and regularly updating the public on project advancements will promote transparency about the use of public funds.



## Bill Foley



**Age:** 50

**Occupation:** Writer/podcaster at ButteCast.com

**Education:** Butte High graduate 1993; B.A. in Journalism and a minor in political science, University of Montana

1997.

**Q: Almost every politician at every level in every place promises transparency if elected. Make a case on why there is or isn't transparency in Butte-Silver Bow government?**

**A:** The most ironic example yet was when the council was debating a transparency resolution. The chief executive pushed an emergency suspension of the rules to kill it. We see these suspensions all the time and that means we don't really have rules for public participation. Secret meetings on a variety of topics are announced after the fact and the public has no say, and that has to stop. When I stop it, we'll start following Montana law and all boards will be posting minutes.

**Q: Many outsiders who know little about Butte know about the Berkeley Pit. It and other sites here will require water treatment in perpetuity. Long after Superfund remediation is complete, Butte will be stuck with stigma that likely affects economic development. How can you as a chief executive mitigate this reputation for contamination?**

**A:** We have to be honest. The stigma is from hiding and downplaying real problems instead of tackling them. Every time a scientist studies something, he or she is attacked. So are other government employees. Much of it comes from the courthouse, and it's not a secret outside of this valley. We have a faulty lead standard, and there are people with the proof. Our chief executive has had it placed under his nose, and he chose to ignore the fact. That is a far bigger stigma than past pollution. Once we demand a science-based cleanup, we will move past all stigmas.

**Q: Many people in Butte believe there is a good-ol'-boy network within county government that includes its jobs. For many years, almost all hires for its top jobs are from within. Why should anyone outside of county government**

**or Montana bother applying for a top county job here?**

**A:** People don't believe it, they know it. Look at the boards and the same names pop up on multiple boards, including county employees. People contracting with Butte-Silver Bow from British Petroleum to engineers are overseeing their own work, and those who get contracts and loans are appointed throughout the government. We have to change that and enforce our ethics rules. If we don't, all we're going to attract is grifters with non-existent nuclear reactors and far away companies looking for free land to leverage. A little transparency will show prospective employees and taxpayers that I'm serious about changing the culture.

**Q: There is plenty of blame cast about for high inflation, high property taxes and other economic hardships, but unlike businesses and families that make cuts in jobs or spending at such times, none of that seems to ever be considered within local government. Why is that and should that change?**

**A:** It's a lot easier to govern in secret, and that's become the norm here. Members of the public who ask questions have been yelled at and harassed, with elected officials and employees acting indignant about being asked. That's the public's right and they certainly have a right to see where their money is being spent. We wouldn't know what the discussions were to increase spending because they weren't open to the public. We got a final budget after deals were cut and it was passed under an emergency suspension of the rules, which allow public scrutiny.

**Q: The county has given buildings or tax dollars or other favors to projects like Praxis, 40 East Broadway and others in exchange for big promises and plans that have yet to really materialize. How would you address that and should it include local claw-backs?**

**A:** All of these deals should have protections for the taxpayers. The guy from Anaconda with the non-existent nuclear reactor is a prime example. The chief executive said he was working with the governor and personally vetted the project. We had people ready to give the guy land and the key to the city. I used Google to find out the reactor he mentioned is a far-off concept still on paper. The desire to have groundbreaking ceremonies with the governor needs to be

cooled by a little due diligence and a lot less secrecy to avoid waste.

## RACE FOR DISTRICT JUDGE IN BUTTE-SILVER BOW COUNTY

Kurt Krueger, a longtime state District Court judge in Butte, is retiring in December and not seeking another six-year term. There are two candidates for the post in the Nov. 5 general election.

Frank Joseph has been an attorney in Butte for 36 years, representing clients in numerous fields of the law. Ann Shea has worked as a lawyer in Butte for 27 years, 15 of them as a prosecutor in the County Attorney's Office.

Here is some brief bio information on each candidate and their answers to questions posed by The Montana Standard:

### Frank J. Joseph

**Age:** 61

**Occupation:** Attorney past 36 years

**Education:** Graduated Butte Central High School 1980; Graduated University of Montana 1986; Graduated University of Montana School of Law 1989



**Q: What sets you apart from your opponent in this judicial race?**

**A:** My experience sets me apart from my opponent. Like my opponent I have practiced criminal law for 36 years. I have also represented clients in administrative proceedings, contract matters, insurance disputes, personal injury trials, Social Security cases, worker's compensation and employment matters, real estate transactions and disputes, quiet title matters, family law, adoptions, and dependent/neglect cases to name a few. I am also involved in the community having served on the Butte School Board, the Public Housing Authority Board of Directors for 17 years and coached girls ASA softball for 12 years.

**Q: A lot of people say the presumption of innocence doesn't exist anymore. What can a District Court judge do to ensure it does exist and the public knows it exists, at least in Butte-Silver Bow County?**

**A:** The presumption of innocence dates back to the signing of the Magna Carta and is the foundation of the United States Criminal Justice System. However,

with today's technology, a defendant is often tried and convicted in the media, especially social media, before the case is tried in the courts. It is imperative that a judge recognize this influence and demand that the defendant's presumption of innocence be protected from the time of the initial charges, while considering bail and at trial.

**Q: The Butte-Silver Bow jail has been far over capacity for a long time and the problem has been even more pressing in recent months. Everyone says it's a systemic problem. Judges are part of the system. What can or should a judge do to address the problem here?**

**A:** First, a judge's decision to incarcerate someone cannot be based on the conditions at the jail. A judge can assist by ensuring a criminal defendant receives a fair and speedy bond hearing where the bond conditions and bail is commensurate with the crime charged. This may include notices to appear and electronic monitoring for non-violent offenders. A judge must also be concerned about an inmate's care, safety and civil rights. Overcrowding threatens those concerns. An expedited trial schedule where continuances and delays are limited is yet another possible solution to overcrowding at the jail.

**Q: During law and motion proceedings, it is common for at least one, two or even more defendants to not appear so bench warrants are issued. Some people even joke that everyone in Butte has an active warrant. What as a judge would you do about this?**

**A:** If the defendant's failure to appear is intentional then holding a defendant in contempt of court is appropriate. A defendant's failure to appear in court is sometimes caused by failure of communication between the State and the defendant's counsel or between the defense attorney and the defendant. Providing timely notice of the defendant's expected court appearances to all parties will prevent much of this problem. However, until charged and the individual is expected in court there is little a judge can do if a defendant fails to appear other than to reschedule the hearing and/or issue a bench warrant.

**Q: What are the changes you would most like to see in the judicial system, especially in Montana?**

**A:** The judicial system must remain non-partisan and free from other influences



such as money and special interests. I also believe in utilizing and enhancing diversionary courts such as Drug courts, DUI courts, and Veteran's courts which reduce caseloads in traditional criminal courts while providing education, accountability, and punishment to less violent offenders. Finally, I would like to see the public better educated about the function, process and administration of the court system and how it serves the public on a daily basis in civil, criminal and administrative matters.



### Ann Shea



**Age:** 63

**Occupation:** Deputy county attorney and prosecutor, Butte-Silver Bow

**Education:** Graduate, Butte Central High School; Bachelor of Science degree in

Computer Science - Business Information Systems from Montana Tech; Juris Doctor from the University of Montana School of Law

**Q: What sets you apart from your opponent in this judicial race?**

**A:** My extensive legal experience, dedication to community service and commitment to justice distinguishes me in this judicial race. As a Deputy County Attorney, appearing in court weekly, and having done hundreds of trials in my career, I have gained extensive experience and knowledge necessary to make the tough decisions facing judges today. With over 27 years of practice in Montana, I have expertise in family law, criminal law

and treatment courts with a proven track record of finding innovative solutions to complex issues. As a cancer survivor and first-generation college graduate, I bring resilience, determination and empathy to the bench.

**Q: A lot of people say the presumption of innocence doesn't exist anymore. What can a District Court judge do to ensure it does exist and the public knows it exists, at least in Butte-Silver Bow County?**

**A:** It is crucial for a district judge to uphold and protect this fundamental principle. This is done by conducting fair and impartial hearings, providing clear and thorough explanations of legal proceedings to all parties involved. By actively demonstrating and promoting the importance of this fundamental principle, I can ensure that the public knows the presumption of innocence exists. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the district judge to uphold the presumption of innocence and ensure that it is known and respected by all. I am committed to doing just that if elected to serve the people of Butte-Silver Bow.

**Q: The Butte-Silver Bow jail has been far over capacity for a long time and the problem has been even more pressing in recent months. Everyone says it's a systemic problem. Judges are part of the system. What can or should a judge do to address the problem here?**

**A:** I have the unique insider's perspective on the critical issue of overcrowding in our detention center and the systemic challenges involved. I am committed to working collaboratively with criminal justice stakeholders to address this problem. As Judge, I will streamline court processes and expedite

case resolution, implementing efficient case management strategies to alleviate the backlog contributing to overcrowding. The Department of Corrections' significant presence in the detention center exacerbates this issue, with a quarter of inmates being DOC inmates. While some elements of this systemic challenge are beyond the control of a district court, proactive measures can be taken to mitigate this issue.

**Q: During law and motion proceedings, it is common for at least one, two or even more defendants to not appear so bench warrants are issued. Some people even joke that everyone in Butte has an active warrant. What as a judge would you do about this?**

**A:** Some defendants erroneously believe that skipping court appearances will result in unenforceable bench warrants due to jail overcrowding. Others, so entrenched in their addiction, find daily tasks like attending court dates challenging. As a judge, I will convey the consequences to the former and support pretrial treatment for the latter. Through proactive case management, I will diligently tackle these challenges. At present, defendants typically appear at arraignment and trial, leading to lengthy periods between mandatory appearances. Implementing in-court omnibus hearings will require defendants to appear more frequently, fostering accountability and potentially addressing this issue effectively.

**Q: What are the changes you would most like to see in the judicial system, especially in Montana?**

**A:** Civil commitments over criminal commitments for drug possession cases, especially in light of the prevalence of substance use disorders in families. Montana law permits deferred sentences for drug possession, but self-initiated treatment often leads to revocation and re-sentencing. Diversion programs and rehabilitation initiatives aim to address addiction issues and decrease recidivism rates. Treatment court data supports this approach. Enabling civil commitments can ensure ongoing treatment for defendants. Tackling substance use disorders early can lead to a reduction in collateral crimes like theft and burglary – crimes often committed to feed addictions. This approach offers rehabilitation and the chance for individuals to reintegrate into society, rather than criminalizing addiction.