

2026

GENERAL ELECTION

VOTER RESOURCE GUIDE

INSIDE



IMPORTANT
DATES TO
REMEMBER



HOW TO
REGISTER
TO VOTE



KEY
ELECTIONS &
INITIATIVES

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LEE MONTANA

2026 VOTER GUIDE

GENERAL ELECTION

LEE MONTANA

Welcome to the Lee Montana 2026 Voter Guide.

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

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

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

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

and how to contact them before casting your vote.

How did we put this guide together?

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

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

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

Important Voting Dates

Mail ballots mailed: Oct. 9

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

Election Day: Tuesday, Nov. 3rd

Polling locations open, last day to return a mailed ballot

Montana Secretary of State's candidate filing website.

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

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

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

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2026 General Election Voter Guide: The Questions

U.S. Senate

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

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

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

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

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

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

US House

1st Congressional District

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

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

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

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

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

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

US House

2nd Congressional District

Question 1. What are the most pressing



THOM BRIDGE, INDEPENDENT RECORD

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

issues facing Montanans and how as a U.S. Representative would you address them?

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

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

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

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

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

Public Service Commission

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

Question 2. The PSC has been plagued by bad headlines in recent years. What changes would you support to restore public trust in the commission and how it runs?

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

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

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

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

Montana Legislature

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

promised by developers?

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

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

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

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

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

U.S. SENATE



Kyle Austin (Lib)

Age: 43

Location: Billings

Education: Doctorate of Pharmacy

Occupation: Pharmacist and CEO of Pharm406

Contact information:

www.kyleaustinmt.com

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

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

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

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

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

5. No

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



Alani Bankhead (Dem)

Age: 44

Location: Helena

Education: BA, Crime, Law, and Justice - Penn State University; BA, Latin American Studies, Minor in Military Studies - Penn State University; MS, International Relations,

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

Occupation: Law Enforcement/Military

Contact information: www.alaniformt.com, 406-213-3217, info@alanibankhead-forsenate.com

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

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

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

4. 1) Stop corporations from being able to buy houses. Use anti-trust laws to break up big corporations that have a stranglehold on the markets such as the big four corporations that control our meat processing industry. Make the wealthy pay their fair share by instituting a wealth tax. 2) Raise the capital gains limit from \$250k to \$500k to allow people to sell homes without paying taxes. This would also bring the prices of houses down with more inventory. 3) Stop the illegal

war on Iran to bring gas, diesel, fertilizer, and everyday item prices down.

5. Yes

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



Seth Bodnar (Ind)

Age: 47

Location: Missoula

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

in Economics and Social History and Master of Science in Comparative Social Policy

Occupation: Candidate for U.S. Senate

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

2. I'm against any data center that raises our power bills by a single cent, threatens our water or wildlife, or moves forward without our local communities having the final say, period. I'll support the Ratepayer Protection Act to make sure data center energy costs never get passed onto Montana families, mandatory public disclosure of a project's water and energy use before permits are issued, and real local authority for communities to reject a project that threatens their water or land. Here's why neither party in D.C. has done anything about this: both parties are bankrolled by the same Big Tech companies they're supposed to hold accountable. I don't take their money, and here's what that actually buys you:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

The series includes three short videos:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

an Independent senator who can say no. Montanans shouldn't have to pay the price for decisions made by out-of-state corporations looking to profit off a state that's already been taken advantage of for too long.

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

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

5. Eliminating the filibuster won't fix our broken and corrupt political system. The problem is that we've lost the ability to find common ground because there is too much incentive in D.C. to fight and divide in the name of scoring political points. That is what has to change. That's why I'm running as an Independent, because I believe Montana needs a leader that answers only to the people of this state, never to the whims of a political Party. It's why I've released a comprehensive political reform agenda to break the partisan

stranglehold in Washington. It calls for term limits, a ban on stock trading, and an end to dark money in our elections. As Montana's Independent senator, my focus would be building a bloc of independent-minded senators willing to work across party lines to get real things done, rather than changing the rules simply because they're inconvenient to whichever party holds power at the moment.

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



Kurt Alme (Rep)

Age: 59

Location: Billings

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



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

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

1. We need to make life more affordable, make our communities safer, and protect our Montana way of life. I'm the only candidate who has spearheaded two of the largest tax cuts in state history and balanced our state budget to make life more affordable. I'm the only candidate who has been endorsed by 34 sheriffs, has locked up violent criminals and drug dealers, and reduced violent crime to make our communities safer. As a Montana native, I will stand for common sense policies to protect our way of life. I received an A rating from the NRA while my two liberal opponents received F ratings. I will also support our veterans and ag community, protect our public lands, keep boys out of girls' sports, and secure our borders and elections. I'm running because Montana is my home. My wife Sandra and I have a

wonderful life here, and we want our kids and grandkids to have an even better life — with the same freedoms and even greater opportunities than we have.

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

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

4. As I talk with Montanans, they tell me they're struggling to make ends meet. Everything from gas and groceries to health care and housing costs too much. As Senator, making life more affordable will be my top priority. I'll fight to rein in Washington's reckless spending to lower inflation, make groceries and everything else more affordable, and lower mortgage rates so more Montanans can afford to buy a home. I'll fight to keep taxes low to make paychecks bigger, like the tax cuts on Social Security, tips, and overtime that my two liberal opponents oppose. I'll fight to cut red tape to create more good-paying jobs and to unleash American energy to lower prices.

Everyone promises to cut taxes and rein in spending, but I'm the only candidate in this race who has spearheaded two of the largest tax cuts in state history, balanced the state budget, and helped make Montana debt-free. That's my record, and as Senator, I'll bring it to Washington to do it again.

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

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



U.S. HOUSE 1ST CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Note: Three candidates running for U.S. House 1st Congressional District, Aaron Flint (Rep), Kimberly Persico (Ind), and Nick Sheedy (Lib), did not participate in the questionnaire.

Sam Forstag (Dem)



Age: 32

Location: Missoula

Education: I have a bachelor's degree from the University of Montana.

Occupation: Up until I had to resign my position to run for this office, I was a smokejumper and union

leader here in Montana.

Contact information: samformontana.com, info@samformontana.com, @SamForstag

1. The biggest issue we're facing is how hard it's become for Montanans to make ends meet. In Congress, I'll fight for investments and reforms to make sure every Montanan can work one job and afford housing & healthcare, childcare & a secure retirement. That means investments to build housing Montanans can afford in the places we need, through programs like CDBG and land trusts, and legislation to ban private equity firms from buying up our homes. On healthcare, let's give every American the freedom to join Medicare and expand that coverage to make it comprehensive & free for working-class Montanans. On childcare, cost has become too big a barrier for Montanans trying to raise a family. Instead of burning billions on another needless war, let's invest at home to make childcare affordable for everyone. Finally, I'll fight to rebalance our tax system to make sure the richest people in this country carry their own weight just like the rest of us, so we can stop digging deeper into debt.

2. This might be the most pressing existential problem we face. AI is a technology with the potential to cure cancer or end all of humanity. It has the potential to concentrate even more power in the hands of the few. That's far too much risk - and too much power - for a few unelected tech executives to hold. I'll fight to make sure these companies can't build their data centers until and unless they can prove that they'll provide their own power, that they won't put our land, air and water at risk, and that we aren't left paying a penny to subsidize their profits. Just as urgently, we need to create stringent public oversight, & we need to regulate AI tech to make sure companies aren't creating models that put our children, and humanity itself, at risk. That means third-party verification

to ensure their models are safe, back-end access that allows us to pull the plug if need be, and making these companies pay their way at every step of the process.

3. The BBB's \$1 trillion in Medicaid cuts to fund a tax break for corporations and the ultra-rich is shameful, and it leaves us all paying so much more for less. Millions of Americans have already lost coverage, and the state of Montana is planning to hire 53 new staff to implement paperwork requirements that'll boot another 30-50,000 Montanans off their healthcare. Meanwhile, we pay more in our premiums and rural hospitals are put at risk of closure-all of which my opponent cheered on from his recording studio. These cuts to Medicaid & Medicare hurt patients and providers, and only the insurance corporations benefit. That's by design, and it's supported by politicians like my opponent, who take donations from corporate PACs. In Congress, I'll fight to give every Montanan the choice of leaving the insurance corporations' broken system, and joining Medicare if they choose. I'll also work to ban corporate spending in our elections so that corruption can't stand in the way of our healthcare.

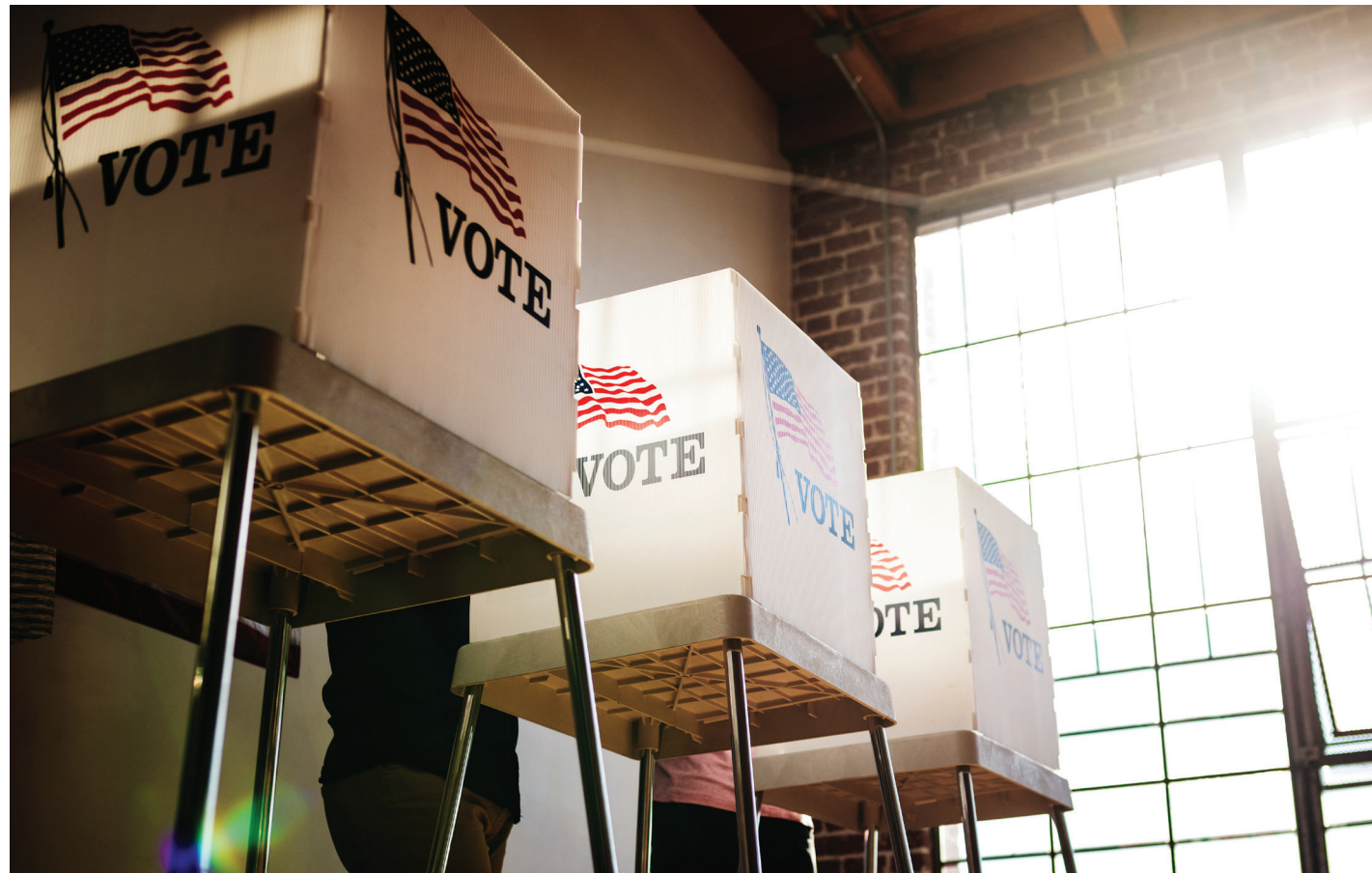
4. We need to make major investments and reforms to our systems of housing & healthcare, commonsense changes to save Social Security, and to rebalance our tax system so we aren't going deeper into

debt to pay for it. I'll fight for a housing bill that invests in building affordable housing, expanding apprenticeships, and banning out-of-state corporations from buying up our homes. I'll fight for investments & reforms to healthcare to make sure every Montanan has the choice of leaving private insurance corporations' broken system, and to make sure that Medicare has the coverage and reimbursement rates we need. And I'll fight to save working Montanans' retirement by scrapping the cap on contributions to Social Security. We can ensure that Social Security is there for all of us by making sure the top 6% of earners pay their fair share. Lastly, I'll work to rebalance our tax system to make sure that corporations and the richest people in this country carry their own weight.

5. We're all paying over \$1 billion/day for a war no one voted for. The Iran War should've never started without approval from Congress, which has the sole power to declare war under our constitution. Our representatives' abdication of that duty is a deep failure of leadership, and it's led to catastrophic consequences - service members dead, skyrocketing prices, and the weakening of American power on the global stage. We've allowed far too much power to concentrate in the executive branch, and now, once again, the American people are paying the price for another protracted war in the Middle East. I'll join bipartisan efforts to end this needless

war, and to invest instead at home by filling the 28,000 VA jobs that were cut just last year. Further, I'll work to end forever wars by repealing the 2001 AUMF that handed too much power to the executive branch. If Congress deems it necessary to put American lives at risk in a war, then every member should be willing to vote accordingly.

6. So much of what makes Montana great is the work past generations put in building it. For too many older Montanans, we're failing to honor that legacy like we should. Right now, projections indicate that Social Security will start cutting benefits in six years if nothing is changed. And nothing is changing, because the obvious solution to save the program would mean that ultra-rich political donors have to pay the same rate as the rest of us. In Congress, I'll fight to eliminate the Social Security payroll tax cap so that the top 6% of earners pay the same rate into Social Security as those of us in the bottom 94%. That alone would help ensure Social Security's solvency for the next 75 years. I'll also support legislation like the Social Security Expansion Act, which would increase benefits for seniors by an average of \$2,400/year-while keeping the program funded well into the future so that older Montanans aren't left going without because their Social Security checks don't cut it.



PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION DISTRICT 5

Note: One candidate running for Public Service Commission, Annie Bukacek (Rep), did not participate in the questionnaire.

Kevin Hamm (Dem)



Age: 53
Location: East Helena
Education: College
Occupation: IT Consultant
Contact information: kevinhamm.com, campaign@kevinhamm.com, 406-417-0070

1. Having a two-year moratorium so that we can figure out what needs to be in place for these structures to not be the environmental catastrophes they currently are is imperative and might not be enough time to come to good policy. The tax rebates to them need to be repealed, the costs for water and energy need to be calculated and include in that calculation how that additional consumption would affect neighboring communities. The noise pollution and other pollutants from their systems will need smart engineering required, and clean-up costs would need to be front-loaded to make sure that legal loopholes aren't used to avoid those responsibilities. We have the right to a healthful environment, and there's no reason we should abandon that right just because a billionaire wants a big box of LLMs making ridiculous things and possibly destroying humanity.

2. Do the job so that the people aren't getting screwed and the company has the ability to make some money too. It's about balance, and we can do that by being smart, engaged, and interested in improving things. And being professional at work isn't that hard, it's a wonder that the current commission has accomplished anything—and many would say they haven't. That's what will change right away with me.

3. The thought that the people of Montana are not smart enough to vote for good people is ridiculous. This is a blatant attempt to make the PSC a board that is basically a do-nothing retirement job for past legislators. We need smarter people running, not more power in the executive.

4. Doing the actual job of the PSC. It's not like we can't put smart regulations in place, but there's been a desire by the members of the PSC to not ask the deep questions or demand answers, and instead just hope that one day NWE will hire them after their terms. That's not the job they were elected to, and it's not the job that Montanans need accomplished. We need to be smart, we need to demand grid upgrades and maintenance,

we need to make sure that while NWE is allowed a profit they aren't just extracting money from Montanans and not actually providing the necessary progress for the utility.

5. Yes. Moving to more micro generation, local energy storage options, solar on every roof and parking spot, and wind where it makes sense, is critical. Had NWE worked to do this, they would still be profitable and they would also be in a much better place to offer energy to hyper-scale data centers in any state over their transmission lines for whatever money they could get without impacting Montana residential, commercial and agricultural customers.

6. The proposed merger of NWE and Black Hills and the fallout from letting yet another giant corporation take control of Montana's resources without the guardrails to keep Montana safe and healthy.



SENATE DISTRICT 43

David Bedey (Rep)



Age: 71
Location: Hamilton
Education: B.S. in Civil Engineering (Montana State University); M.A. in National Security and Strategic Studies (U.S. Naval War College); Ph.D. in Space Physics (University of

Alaska-Fairbanks)

Occupation: U.S. Army officer (retired)
Contact information: www.davidbedey.com, d.f.bedey@gmail.com

1. Data centers must employ closed-loop cooling systems to significantly reduce their need for water and must generate their own power so that Montana ratepayers are not adversely affected by the centers. I will also work to ensure that data centers pay their fair share of Montana taxes--both to the state and to the counties in and around the center.

2. I will continue to support Montana's Medicaid program, which provides a safety net for low-income workers across our state and protects the financial viability of our rural healthcare system.

3. I am open to the idea of a flat income tax but before committing to support it, I will carefully evaluate its potential impact on the state budget, including what reductions in state services might be necessary to offset the reduction in state revenue. In the Montana Legislature (unlike Congress), we must balance the budget. This entails setting priorities and making hard decisions. I look forward to seeing the details of the Governor's

proposal.

4. Our system of government was purposefully designed by the Founders to bring competing interests to the table where reasonable debate could occur and solutions to challenges facing us could be found. In the past, both conservatives and liberals recognized that this is essential to preserving political and social cohesion. But the increasing domination of both political parties by extreme ideologues poses an existential threat. In the long run, restoring normalcy to both parties is more important than any one policy issue. Most Montanans recognize this. So I will continue to seek common ground where I can find it.

5. The property tax package, which passed the 2025 Legislature on a bipartisan basis with the support of Governor Gianforte, addressed a massive tax shift that occurred between 2022 and 2023 and threatened to tax many Montanans out of their homes. The package achieved this objective by rebalancing tax responsibilities between the various classes of property across the state. I will support reasonable efforts to improve the package but will oppose efforts to revive alternatives offered last session that provided paltry relief for homeowners while benefiting special interests.

6. According to the Montana Blockchain and Digital Innovation Task Force, the most serious crypto-scams facing Montanans are perpetrated on cryptocurrency kiosks, which function something like ATMs. I will support legislation proposed by the Montana Commissioner of Securities and Insurance (the State Auditor) that bans these devices until such time that they cannot be used to commit fraud.



Stephen Leuchtman (Dem)



Age: 56
Location: Hamilton
Education: Corvallis HS, University of Nevada
Occupation: Insurance Sales
Contact information: none currently

1. Full ban on data centers larger than 50 mw

2. Expand Medicaid

3. Do not support flat tax

4. A good idea is a good idea, doesn't matter who the legislator caucuses with. Water and economic development are two things I would be happy to collaborate on.

5. Yes, the property tax needs to be made more progressive and we need a luxury tax on homes value at over 10m

6. Tighten regulations on digital assets and crypto, empower banks and credit unions to

develop consumer safeguards, define digital assets as securities and require the same scrutiny that other securities get.



SENATE DISTRICT 49

Willis Curdy (Dem)



Age: 77
Location: Missoula
Education: B.A. History- University of Montana; M.ED- University of Montana; Post Masters Study
Occupation: Farmer/Rancher

Contact information: willcurdy@gmail.com; (c) 406-546-0523; (h) 406-728-0981; www.willisformontana.com

1. My Senate District 49 constituents have expressed serious concerns about the impact of data centers on their energy bills, water quality and quantity, potential air and water pollution and the noise associated with data center operations. The Montana Legislature must enact legislation guaranteeing that their energy costs will not be impacted by data center loads. A bill similar to the bipartisan U.S. House of Representatives "Rate Payer Protection Act" would be a start. Requiring data centers to produce their own energy and build their own transmission lines is critical. Water availability is another issue. Data centers should use a closed water system to cool their operations. Montana needs to protect constitutionally protected senior water right holders. Air, water and noise pollution questions must be answered. With all these unaddressed issues, the 2027 Montana should pass a two or three year data center moratorium so that the above issues can be resolved.

2. One fifth of Montana residents qualify for either regular Medicaid or legislatively enacted Medicaid expansion. A significant number of Medicaid enrollees also live in rural areas. Access is jeopardized by Montana's failure to implement adequate provider rates for medical personnel. Providers cannot stay in business when they are asked to provide services when expenses outpace their incomes. This is a huge problem in rural Montana and threatens the survival of our rural hospitals and out patient clinics. A minimum three percent provider rate is necessary. The current work requirement re-determination program for Medicaid eligibility is inadequate. The 2027 Legislature must fund an adequate provider rate and fund Department of Public Health and Human Services in a manner to assist Medicaid eligible working Montanans

in completing federally mandated paperwork.

3. I am opposed to the Governor's proposed 4.7% flat tax rate. My constituents tell me that they know who benefits from the flat tax plan and its not them. The plan significantly benefits only one income group and that is the top 1% income earners. The flat tax plan will cost everyone else. Lower state revenues for public schools will put pressure on local property tax payers. Water and sewer projects will either be curtailed or local utilities will ask for higher use rates. How will law enforcement and firefighters be funded? In other ways, locals will be asked to make up the loss in revenue. Is this the Governor's back door effort in pushing forward a state-wide sales tax? Kansas instituted a flat tax in 2010. That law resulted in an economic disaster for the state.

4. Bipartisanship is critical in moving Montana forward. The 2025 property tax initiatives were a great example of members of both parties getting together on a common concern. Together, we need to address domestic violence prevention, water use and availability, outstanding taxation issues, workforce housing, and a growing mental health problem among other concerns. Montana voters can make bipartisanship work even better this November.

5. Yes. The two primary property tax bills were late hour decisions, and some taxation concerns may need another look. A number of full time Montana residents own second homes, especially near recreational opportunities, and I have heard from some of these owners who feel that the law needs some adjustment. These are middle income folks whose families have owned these properties for generations and they believe the law unfairly taxes these properties.

6. In 2024, AARP estimates that Americans, especially seniors were victimized by frauds and scams somewhere between \$81billion and \$ 119 billion. The loss of income to Montanans is no doubt proportional to what is happening to the nation as a whole. Congress is working on the Guarding Unprotected Aging Retirees from Deception Act (GUARD) which provides anti-scam resources for state, local and tribal authorities. This law would train, hire fraud experts and buy anti-scam software. If Congress fails in this effort, I would support a similar program. This Montana made program would assist the insurance and securities commissioner (State Auditor) ability to go after fraud schemes. The same support should be provided to the Attorney General's office and local law enforcement. Protecting against fraud should be a priority. Too many Montanans especially seniors are being hurt.



Brad Tschida (Rep)



Age: 70s
Location: Missoula
Education: BA + 45
Occupation: Realtor
Contact information:
TschidaforMontana.com,
brad@tschida.org, 406-546-4349

1. Until we have sufficient historical and anecdotal information about the negative consequences of data centers, we need to proceed slowly and cautiously. Local citizens should be given the major role of support or rejection of these centers, once information is provided.

2. Prevent all illegal aliens and non-qualified persons from using our federal healthcare services. Without these drains, access should improve and costs dramatically diminish.

3. Government is outside its Constitutional lane and there are numerous areas where cuts to government services would provide little to no impact on services and would allow for any reduction in state revenues. We have a spending problem in Helena, like D.C. We don't have a revenue. Like a household budget, priorities must be given primacy over wants.

4. Bipartisanship is an illusion. To those Republican who tout such actions, it's capitulation to the Left. To Dems, it's gaining control. Never is bipartisanship a movement to the right. All decisions should be based on whether or not a bill "protects and defends the rights and freedoms of the individual", as made clear in the US Constitution.

5. Absolutely. The current program allows the state to pick winners and losers. Property taxes are a tax on unrealized gains on a property and are immoral.

6. Educate. Educate. Educate. Spend money used for promoting tourism to fund such programs. Montana has been discovered. We don't need to advertise our state.



SENATE DISTRICT 50

Shane A. Morigeau (Dem)



Age: 42
Location: Missoula
Education: Bachelors of Science in Resource Conservation – University of Montana, College of Forestry, Juris Doctor - University of Montana School of Law, Master of Laws (LL.M) - University of Arizona Jame E. Rogers College of Law
Occupation: Attorney
Contact information: 406-546-4290, shane@shaneformt.com

1. Because there are far too many unknowns regarding the impacts of data centers to both our environment and electrical grid, we should pause new construction and expansion of data centers to ensure legislative policies adequately protect Montanans. We need guarantees that our national security is protected from AI and that there are appropriate safety protocols in place to appropriately regulate AI technology and data centers before they can expand here. In addition, we need policies in place that ensure that these companies do not extract, pollute, and run. It is critical that we enact laws to protect our energy grid (including affordable energy), water quality, and limit water consumption. Montana communities should have a right to approve or deny these facilities from expanding in their geographical area. And if these companies are to operate in MT, they need to have decommissioning plans and guarantees that they will meet labor standards, pay prevailing wages, and create jobs.

2. We all know Medicaid Expansion is key to health care access, controlling health care costs, and keeping providers' doors open, especially in rural areas. We need to enact policies that cut red tape in the Medicaid system, which means we need a system that works to keep people enrolled, not a system that kicks people off of their health insurance plans. Onerous mandates will undoubtedly

result in folks getting dropped from coverage which means more people will get sicker. This means they may not seek care until its too late, or when they do seek care, it will often be emergency care. This will stress our care providers and increase hospital costs and insurance costs for everyone else. So, we must do everything we can to keep people enrolled. Having dependable access to healthcare will save lives. So we must pass legislation that ensures provider rate increases are adequate, and we appropriately fund DPHHS so they have the resources to assist enrollees and keep them from being dropped.

3. During the 2025 Legislative Session I supported legislation to cut taxes for Montanans. That said, I would oppose a flat tax rate in the 2027 session. Not only because it is a hand out to the rich, but it will undoubtedly take us spiraling toward a sales tax (which Montana has said time and time again that they do not want). Montana is already making major adjustments that resulted from reduced revenues. To make more drastic reductions leaves us too vulnerable. For example, schools have been identified to underfunded by \$300 million annually in Montana. If that wasn't enough, the justice system is notoriously underfunded in Montana, especially county jails and detention centers. We need to be responsible in Montana and we need to demand the rich pay their fair share and that

VOTE Robin Kendall for Montana HD94



I am focused on
Building a Montana
Where Everyone
Can Afford to Live,
Work, Play & Thrive

Let's Build a Stronger Montana Together!
Montana is Worth Fighting For.
People First. Affordable. And Working for Every Montanan.

Learn more about me at
ROBINKENDALL4MONTANA.ORG

Paid for by Robin Kendall for Montana, Democrat, PO Box 7316, Missoula, MT 59807

the working and middle class do not continue to get dogpiled.

4. “Bipartisanship is critical for Montana. Developing legislation based on various perspectives and compromise has always been a core value of mine. Montana is better because of bipartisanship, and we need more of it. Of course, there are always going to be some areas that we know we cannot agree on, but there are far more policies that we agree on or should work together on for the greater good of Montana. Bipartisan legislation I hope to collaborate with my colleagues on next session would be legislation holding pedophiles and child abusers accountable. I will again call upon my colleagues across the aisle to support my legislation to eliminate the statute of limitations for child sex abuse victims seeking justice in a civil case. I will call on my colleagues to keep our court system neutral & non-partisan. I will call on my colleagues to adequately fund education, to not manipulate and gerrymander legislative districts, to protect us from AI, to reel in data centers, & protect our water.

5. The 2025 property tax package did a lot to cut costs for many Montanans, especially for residential property taxpayers who held almost 60% of the burden prior to the session. We heard homeowners across the state telling us we need relief and tax fairness, and we reduced property taxes for 80% of Montanans. However, it is not uncommon for legislation to be improved after major changes have been made. I would expect that there are some areas that we can improve upon such as relief for renters. I proposed legislation last session to ensure renters also received relief, as they often take on the burden of tax increases that landlords incur. In addition, we need to make some fixes for legacy properties, to protect Montanans who may have had legacy homes passed down to them. Long-term rental tax rates have been a source of discussion as well, but they will benefit from a new lower rate that will reflect on bills this fall.

6. During the interim I sat on the Montana Blockchain and Digital Innovation Task Force. We discussed cryptocurrency and ways to better protect Montanans from cryptocurrency fraud and scams. When elected, I would support efforts to regulate or ban cryptocurrency kiosks, which have been a source of fraud. I would support expenditures and legislation to assist law enforcement so that they have the resources needed to properly address cryptocurrency crime. Within that, I would support legislation to dedicate a multi-jurisdictional cryptocurrency crime task force and an appropriation for blockchain tracing tools. Lastly, I would support legislation to direct the State Auditor to better regulate these scams as well as legislation to regulate AI; to ensure that AI isn't being used to target Montanans in cryptocurrency fraud and scams.



HOUSE DISTRICT 85

Note: Candidate for HD 85, Kim Dailey (Rep) did not participate in this questionnaire.

Laura Jackson (Dem)



Age: 83

Location: Hamilton

Education: BA, MFA

Occupation: Retired USFS fire dispatcher, artist

Contact information:

lauraforHD85@gmail.com

1. Projects of this type should be required to provide objective, independently researched and clear information to all possibly impacted communities. This information should cover projected local resource consumption, particularly of water, pollution and predicted environmental impacts, and energy needs and how these will be sourced and delivered for construction phases and long-term operations. These can be reasonably assessed prior to any permitting. Bonds should be required for full remediation if eventually needed. Projects should be powered by renewable energy whenever possible and pay full property taxes at undiscounted rates. Prospects of economic opportunities are just that, prospective. No developer can honestly foresee long term business returns and consequences. One possibility to consider could be a minimum guaranteed contribution to local community services with a proportional increase percentage based on gross income generated by the facility.

2. No child, dependent or working adult in Montana should be without access to affordable basic healthcare. I would support all policies that move our state toward achieving this goal.

3. A flat tax benefits the wealthiest. Already we are failing to meet our constitutional obligation to fund our schools. Businesses depend on and communities expect and deserve a quality public school system, well-funded public safety, affordable housing and workforce development support. All these are threatened by the flat tax which is projected to reduce the state's income. The Legislature must find real ways to lower costs for working families while maintaining critical services. The state is currently failing to honor the agreed upon 3% provider rate increase for Medicaid, jeopardizing rural hospitals and healthcare providers. Other states faced with revenue shortfalls have instituted a statewide sales tax, a generally regressive tax in effect, landing most direly on lower income groups. The least regressive tax is a progressive income tax. Montana could add a tax bracket for those with higher incomes. Clearly this

isn't the time to give Montana's wealthiest residents a tax break.

4. Political results for our common good in a democracy depend on compromise. I would be open to any and all opportunities to compromise for the good of Montanans. Keeping public lands public, open to the general public, and increasing their acreage, as our state population is also increasing, have widespread citizen support that should garner bipartisan legislative support.

5. The package represented a reasonable first step toward fairness in our property tax system. I would support evaluation of more nuanced top end, high rate tax bracket increases and possibly tax credits for low-income, long-term residents. Given a projected shortfall of over 400 million in education funding and that the last income tax rate adjustment reduced state income by about that same amount, we clearly are facing a need to increase tax income.

6. The Montana legislature does not have the power to change human nature. Get-rich-quick and free-lunch fantasies are always attractive. Any established human system will be subjected to fraud and scam attempts. These cannot be pre-emptively legislated out of existence. Obviously, legislators and state employees should be held to the highest standards and be severely penalized for fraudulent and self-dealing activities. We should devote some resources to monitoring new scam and fraud models in the public realm and publicize these through public service and press release channels. Effective prevention and redress require national and international concerted action, particularly for cryptocurrency regulation.



HOUSE DISTRICT 86

Wayne Rusk (Rep)



Age: 56

Location: Corvallis

Education: High School

Occupation: Tradesman/
Tiler

Contact information:

406-370-8486

1. There are many concerns right now about the prospect of data centers, and they are not unfounded. Water and power use, noise levels, and a tax structure that holds them accountable are foremost among them. With one ear I will be listening for the answers to these tough questions, and with the other to the people who would have to live with them.

2. This is something I will be looking into as remedies are proposed to keep medical

insurance as affordable as possible to those with means, and available to those without.

3. Once again there are questions to be answered in regard to this proposal, and not just about revenue. I will await the answers, or ask the questions if need be, if I am elected.

4. Unfortunately, bipartisanship has become a dirty word as the extreme elements on both sides of the aisle have increasingly wrested the parties from the people. Here's a thought: when the people send divided government to Helena—or anywhere else for that matter—they expect them to work together.

5. It is likely. Tax reform of the magnitude affected last session is not a “hole in one.” Some patience is in order as the saddle of taxation is adjusted so as not to gall one bracket or interest over another. Broad relief was achieved—to the extent that it could be—in that we all hang our hat under one roof (homestead act). This I support but would gladly work to address the implications it had in other places.

6. I am not as familiar with this subject as others but would support regulations that protect consumers and investors where possible.



Archie Thomas (Dem)



Age: 75

Location: Hamilton

Education: Hamilton high school, attended U of M, master electrician & plumber State of Montana

Occupation: Retired

Contact information: rino-crat.com, 406-381-7251

1. Immediate moratorium of data center enabling definition of social, economic, power demands, tax methods, climate, local community issues among other areas of concern. It would be my hope once the above are defined data centers in some form could be completed

2. We must fund Medicaid, how and to what extent must be completed within budget framework.

3. No

4. All valid issues of governance will require collaboration and compromise, I'm willing to listen to any serious position regardless of party but I will work to avoid the drama presented by both parties.

5. Revisit yes, stay for dinner will be based on what's to eat.

6. This would require input from independent experts to craft effective regulations similar to financial markets but formulated specifically to address the fraud, scam or cryptocurrency.



HOUSE DISTRICT 87

Note: Both candidates for HD 87, Bill Jones (Dem) and Terry Nelson (Rep) did not participate in this questionnaire.



HOUSE DISTRICT 88

Note: Candidate for HD 88, Greg Overstreet (Rep) did not participate in this questionnaire.

Evan Schroedel (Dem)



Age: 54

Location: Florence

Education: some college

Occupation: Retired

Contact information:

evanschroedel.com

1. We do not have either the resources IE water or the electrical infrastructure to support data centers

2. Medicaid expansion

3. No a flat tax is a regressive tax on working Montanan's

4. I'm willing to work with anybody to help Montana's

5. Yes we need to move to a more progressive tax system, market-based property tax is unfair to working Montanan's.

6. Yes



HOUSE DISTRICT 89

Lyn Hellegaard (Rep)



Age: 68

Location: Missoula

Education: Some college

Occupation: Executive Director

Contact information: lyn@lynformontana.com, www.lynformontana.com

1. Data centers are coming to Montana whether we like it or not, people aren't giving up their phones or Amazon deliveries. The question is whether Montana families pay the price for that growth, or whether the companies building these facilities do.

I believe the burden belongs on them, not you. These are some of the wealthiest companies in the world. They should pay for their own power upgrades, not pass those costs onto your electric bill. They should build on remove or industrial land, not next to your home, farm, or your water supply. If they want to operate here, they should sign real, enforceable agreements guaranteeing

tax revenue for our schools and lower costs for residents. If a developer can't meet those terms, they can build somewhere else. Montana doesn't owe them our land or our water. They owe us.

2. Insurance is not access. A card does not staff an ER. A health insurance card doesn't do you any good if there's no doctor left to see. That's Montana's real problem. Federal changes to Medicaid and the ACA are making it worse, higher costs, more paperwork, more people losing coverage they need. I'd focus new state health dollars on the actual shortage: training and keeping doctors, nurses, and clinics in small towns, not just handing out more insurance cards. I'd cut the paperwork that knocks working families off coverage for no good reason. And I'd make sure providers are paid enough to actually take Medicaid and marketplace patients, because coverage without a clinic is just a waiting list with your name on it. Success isn't how many Montanans have a plan. It's whether your family can get care without a two-hour drive or a bill you can't pay.

3. I'm open to a flat tax, but only if it's proven, in plain numbers, that it won't quietly shift the burden onto homeowners and small businesses or drain funding our schools depend on. I've already put my name on a written promise to Montana taxpayers that I'll fight any effort to raise your taxes, and I take that seriously enough that I won't rubber-stamp a change this big without seeing the real math first. If the number hold up. I'll support it. If they don't, I'd rather keep what we have and get it right than rush something that costs you more down the road.

4. Bipartisanship is a tool, not a virtue contest. I use it when it helps you and skip the performance when it doesn't. Last session proved the loudest fights are usually inside the parties, not between them. You don't care who wins a caucus fight. You care whether a bill lowers your property taxes, keeps your local hospital open, staffs your kid's school, or fixes the road you drive every day. If a colleague across the aisle has a better idea. I'll work with them on it. I won't trade away something I believe is just to get a bipartisan headline, and I won't reject a good idea just because the other party proposed it first. The only question I ask is simple: does it actually help the people who sent me here? That's it.

5. Yes, and here's why. Right now, property taxes get calculated through a maze most homeowners can't follow, and a hot home sale next door can spike your tax bill even though nothing about your own home changed. That's not fair, and it's forcing longtime Montanans, especially seniors on fixed incomes, to sell homes they've owned for decades just to keep up. I'd fix it with a simple, clear homestead exemption everyone can understand, a real cap on how much your taxes can jump year

to year, and a bigger tax credit for elderly homeowners so a reappraisal doesn't force anyone out of their own home. And before we ever talk about raising anyone's taxes, I want a real audit of where the waste is, government should have to live by the same discipline it demands of you. I signed a written pledge to Montana taxpayers that I'll fight to keep your taxes down. This is exactly the kind of fight that pledge was made for.

6. Yes. Protecting people from getting cleaned out is basic constituent work, not a culture-war issue. These scams overwhelmingly target older Montanans, people told to panic and move their savings into a crypto kiosk right now or face arrest. I'd require kiosks to post clear warnings that no government agency ever demands payment in crypto, cap how much a new user can put in at once and require printed receipts with wallet details so law enforcement can actually trace stolen funds. I'd also give banks and credit unions the ability to pause a large, suspicious withdrawal when a teller recognizes the warning signs, and train staff to spot the scripts scammers use. And I'd make sure law enforcement has the legal tools and funding to actually go after the organizers running these schemes, not the everyday Montanans who use crypto legally. Your grandmother's savings shouldn't be an easy target. I'll fight to make sure it isn't.



Mark Thane (Dem)



Age: 67

Location: Missoula

Education: B.A. and M.Ed. from the University of Montana

Occupation: Retired Public School Educator

Contact information:

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1. Any proposed hyperscale data centers should be subject to the Montana Major Facilities Siting Act; there must be electric ratepayer protections; closed-loop cooling system requirements to restrict water usage; noise abatement; wastewater discharge permits; local zoning compliance; reclamation bonding to protect communities from abandoned facilities; and a public review process including public hearings prior to consideration of permitting.

2. The failure of the state to honor the three percent provider rate increase is threatening the viability of many rural critical access hospitals and other healthcare providers in Montana. Montana must continue to support our current expanded Medicaid program to provide access to healthcare for vulnerable

Montanans.

3. I don't support a 4.7% flat tax. Analysis of the proposal by the Montana Budget and Policy Center clearly demonstrated that the vast majority of the benefit would go to the wealthiest Montanans. Trickle-down economics is a myth, as evidenced yet again by the Trump tax cuts adding \$4.7 trillion dollars to the national debt. Income tax is far and away the largest source of revenue for the state, and when we experience our next recession (which is inevitable), we will be forced to make significant cuts. The Governor likes to compare our income tax rate to states like Idaho and Utah, both of which are sales-tax states. It's an apples-to-oranges comparison.

4. It is imperative for members of the legislature to set aside partisan politics and focus on that which is in the best interest of the state and its citizens. There is room for constructive and civil dissent; however, all policy decisions should be made through thoughtful collaboration.

5. More than 80% of Montana homeowners saw a reduction in property taxes on their primary residence. A majority will see another reduction this year as the second phase of the policy is implemented. There are some potential revisions that merit consideration, including analysis and review of the impact on rental properties and their tenants as well as the higher tier tax rate on legacy properties owned by Montana families.

6. Fraud and scams continue to be an issue and are being further exacerbated by the powerful AI tools. The roles of the Montana Commissioner of Securities and Insurance as well as those of consumer protection entities must be supported. Scammers must be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.



HOUSE DISTRICT 90

Note: Candidate for HD 90, Kelley Durbin-Williams (Ind) did not participate in this questionnaire.

Jeff Stanek (Rep)



Age: 37

Location: St. Regis

Education: Masters Degree

Occupation: Social Studies Teacher

Contact information:

stanekforhd90.com

1. We must protect our water, our power infrastructure and our local communities. If this can be guaranteed, then we can further the conversation. The catch 22 is that AI and Data centers are our generation's space race or nuclear arms

race. Likewise, there is a national security component to it, along with major economic implications. We need to have open dialogue with our communities and keep control local as best as possible in such a dynamic situation.

2. This is a false premise. The reason healthcare costs are rising is because of the insurance companies, the hospitals, the pharmaceutical companies, and big government colluding together. Pair that with the massive spending by our federal government, driving inflation sky high, and you have a recipe for expensive healthcare. To solve this problem, we should create a way for Montanans to invest in their own health care, tax free. This could come through health care coops, expanding health savings plans, or providing more free market protections in the health care industry to encourage competition.

3. Yes, I support a flat rate income tax. We had a budget surplus of over a billion dollars last go-around. The government does not need more of our money.

4. This is part of politics. History proves it. That said, I want to love my neighbor as myself and sometimes that means working together and finding common ground. However, sometimes that means standing up against bad policies, bad laws, and bad ideas that take freedoms away from Montanans or grow government. I have no problem doing either of those things. It doesn't mean I hate someone...We need to remember it is ok to disagree. As for a specific issue, I would hope that my colleagues across the aisle would support my quest to repeal the chicken, goat, beehive, horse, sheep, and cattle tax. I imagine many of them own or know someone who owns these animals and is probably not aware they are supposed to be paying taxes on them. What a ridiculous law, it needs to go away.

5. Absolutely. The property tax package is a sham. Like many laws in government, all it does is move the tax burden from one group to another, never actually lowering the total amount of taxes collected. That is a hallmark of socialism by the way. How about we implement a low, flat rate property tax across all types of property? Simplify the tax structure, get rid of the favorites, protect our property rights, and fix the problems with levies; making permissive levies illegal, and changing the structure of levies to declared amounts to be raised in dollars. Then, shut the levy down when that amount is raised for that specific project that the taxpayer has voted yes on.

6. I would vote to increase the punishments for those crimes and enforce the laws we have, making sure to keep the language updated with these new technologies.

★ ★ ★

HOUSE DISTRICT 91

Note: Candidate for HD 91, Charles Headley (Rep) did not participate in this questionnaire.

Shelly R. Fyant (Dem)



Age: 68

Location: Arlee

Education: B.S. Business Administration-emphasis Management

Occupation: Legislator

Contact information: shellyformontana@gmail.com, 406-645-5633

1. I do not support large-scale data centers. Economic opportunity is limited to short-medium term construction jobs. Data centers do not support long term employment for operational purposes. These are not worth the negative environmental impacts, especially the life blood of Mother Earth, water. Montana is already over-appropriated as far as quantity of water. The water used becomes contaminated and degrades the overall quality of water. Additionally, the noise, light and air pollution are threats to public health and safety. The high energy use is another concern. Until there is more transparency around these data centers' business plans and operations, I cannot support their development in Montana.

2. Other states have set out-of-pocket limits for prescription drugs; regulated state-based standardized plans with i.e. no deductibles, copays or coinsurance; guaranteed protection for consumers with pre-existing conditions, required zero-cost coverage of preventative services, eliminated lifetime and annual limits and extended dependent coverage up to age 26. Several states have codified these and other healthcare savings, but it will require a bipartisan effort in Montana.

3. I do not support a flat income tax of 4.7% which will decrease revenues to the State's general fund, which in turn will require us to cut services. What services would the Governor have us cut: public school funding, healthcare, housing or childcare subsidies, SNAP?

4. I think we should agree to leave our Ds and Rs at the door, change our seating arrangement on the House floor so we're not sitting across the aisle--divided, and even up the committee makeup with equal Democrats and Republicans. I think we could begin to build stronger relationships that way and have more in-depth conversations and solutions vs voting party line on everything. I would love to collaborate on food security, housing affordability and protecting the environment for generations to come.

5. The Legislature absolutely needs to revisit the property tax package that was

decided in the 11th hour last session. There is room for improvement and change. I would love to understand it more fully and be able to relate that to constituents with fixed, limited incomes; second homes, short-term and long-term rentals, etc.

6. Encourage the State Commissioner of Securities and Insurance AKA the State Auditor to provide more public forums, videos, mailings, etc. addressing these issues. I attended one such day long presentation in Kalispell during the Interim and it was very informative.

★ ★ ★

HOUSE DISTRICT 93

Ben Davis (Dem)



Age: 50

Location: Missoula

Education: B.S., Georgetown University; M.A., University of Chicago; J.D., Catholic University of America

Occupation: Non-Profit Executive Director

Contact information: davisformontana.com, ben@davisformontana.com

1. The legislature needs to play a significant role in studying the potential impacts of proposed data centers on Montana's environment and energy grid before firms proposing to operate data centers are allowed to set up shop in the state. We must ensure that the review process for proposed centers is transparent and evidence-based and that any added costs or energy shortages caused by the data centers are passed on to the data centers and not individual ratepayers or small businesses. I would also like to explore the possibility of creating a new tax on energy consumption by data centers that could benefit the state general fund and local communities.

2. The fact is, too many Montana families are in crisis and tens of thousands lack access to quality and affordable health care. First and foremost, I will protect Medicaid coverage for needy Montana families and children and work to ensure that provider reimbursement rates are adequate and cover the cost of care. I will also advocate for Congress to restore Medicaid funding at the federal level, particularly for our rural, frontier and Tribal areas most impacted by the recent cuts. I will work to expand incentives for behavioral health and medical providers to operate in under-served rural, frontier, and Tribal areas to ensure that there are providers to provide care to needy patients. I will also support deepening investments in early prevention

programs that work upstream to address the root causes of chronic disease and behavioral health crises in Montana communities.

3. No, I do not support a flat income tax that rewards the wealthiest Montanans over working families.

4. Bipartisanship should play a significant role in the Montana legislature. I hear over and over again from voters that Montanans are looking for leaders who are willing to put the partisanship aside, and use common sense to find common ground. Throughout my career, I have put our country and community over partisan interests. I served our country overseas fighting terrorism, advocated for crime victims as a prosecutor of child abuse and domestic violence, and I currently lead a non-profit that works to disrupt generational cycles of poverty. Housing, education funding, and property tax reform are some of the areas where there are opportunities to work across the aisle.

5. Yes, I support revisiting the 2025 property tax legislation. While the 2025 reforms helped to reduce property taxes for most primary residences, the law has harshly penalized some small businesses and multi-family housing owners and is adversely impacting their bottom lines. In some cases, these increased costs are being passed on to consumers and tenants with higher prices. We need tax and revenue solutions that prioritize new revenues from the most significant economic sectors, like tourism, versus picking categories of property owners as winners and losers in our property tax system.

6. Yes. I have extensive experience combating fraud and financial crime and will use those skills to protect Montanans from fraud and scams. Earlier in my career, I worked to combat financial crime in the U.S. government and later established a company that supports governments and businesses in identifying and managing against these risks.

★ ★ ★

Roy Handley (Rep)



Age: 60

Location: Clinton

Education: College, Associates Degree

Occupation: Rancher / Businessman

Contact information:

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1. I support business development as long as public concerns are heard and addressed, and the development will not increase Montana residents' power bills or degrade Montanans quality of life. Any and all costs associated with

development of the centers would need to be borne by the developer. This may include the developer producing their own power needs. I would support policy that requires an analysis identifying the positive and negative impacts (environmental, economic, etc.), created by development of the center. The developer would need to mitigate those impacts. If negative impacts cannot be mitigated, the project should not go forward.

2. The Montana Dept of Public Health and Human Services has drafted the Montana State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP). The plan should be reviewed and health professionals consulted before decisions on policy are made. I support policies that keep Montanans healthy, such as incentives for receiving preventative care, assistance to low income families for nutrition and children's check-ups with doctors, and providing satellite clinics in under-served rural areas. Preventative measures like these will help decrease health costs by reducing the number of people who develop severe health problems. I also support implementation of Health Savings Accounts.

3. Yes, I would support a flat tax. First, I would want to see analysis and data showing how implementation of a flat tax will affect state revenues, and that it will truly decrease the total tax burden (state income tax plus

property tax) on all Montanans.

4. Bipartisanship is a good thing, especially when it results in policies that help reduce regulation and tax burdens on Montana citizens. I will work with anyone that brings forth proposals that limit the size of government and government spending, limit the government's overreach on the people of Montana, reduce regulation and burdensome paperwork on small businesses, and that will reduce property taxes for working Montanans.

5. Yes, this should be re-visited, because some Montana homeowners are still paying high property taxes. This cannot continue. Property taxes keep rising in some counties (i.e. Missoula). The county continues to ask for new levies to cover government spending. County and state governments need to take a hard look at what services are truly essential. Local governments need to ask if spending is for something that is needed (i.e. road maintenance, bridge repair, or walking paths that keep children safe) or is it a "nice thing to have" (i.e. new trails built solely for recreation).

6. I would support legislation that prosecutes those committing this type of fraud, and policies that increase the penalties for those convicted of these crimes. Harsh penalties must exist for these criminals that prey on the elderly and other

vulnerable Montanans. I support the current State campaign of educating the public of how to recognize these scams and protect themselves.

★ ★ ★

HOUSE DISTRICT 94

Note: Both candidates for HD 94, Robin Kendall (Dem) and Greg Woodward (Rep) did not participate in this questionnaire.

★ ★ ★

HOUSE DISTRICT 96

Bob Carter (Dem)



Age: 61
Location: Missoula
Education: BS in Computer Science from University of Montana
Occupation: Financial software, data analysis & IT
Contact information:
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1. Developers of large data centers should not be allowed to take advantage of

Montana. Therefore, they should be required to go above and beyond and contribute to the communities that will feel the most impact. Our state should have siting requirements to ensure their high-impacts are located in appropriate areas. They need to be hyper-responsible with their minimal water use and discharge, which needs to be independently verified. They need to be fully responsible for their entire infrastructure costs and not pass any costs on to local ratepayers, and all work needs to be done in an open and transparent way. Their power use and environmental impact needs to be mitigated. Only then should a large data center be considered.

2. I support a strategy built around continuity of coverage, targeted affordability assistance, and stronger rural healthcare. Montana cannot fully replace lost federal funding, but it can prevent avoidable coverage losses and use state dollars where they have the greatest effect. Medicaid Expansion was passed last session, and we need to protect that as well.

3. I oppose a flat tax. A flat tax in Montana only helps the wealthy, that's why I proposed a more progressive graduated tax structure that taxed income over half a million dollars by an additional one percent, and using that revenue to give taxpayers earning under \$45,000 a tax break.

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4. It's sad when the word bipartisanship is used as an insult against legislators. If the other side is going to fight amongst themselves, I don't mind creating a minority-majority when it comes to advancing our core values.

5. There may be some cases where multi-generational properties were assessed higher taxes that will need to be evaluated. Maybe the Property Tax Assistance program could be used in special cases for evaluation. If PTAP needed to be expanded, that could be a solution.

6. We need the attorney general's office to play an expanded roll in all fraud and scams, as it is usually beyond the scope of local law enforcement.



HOUSE DISTRICT 97

Melody Cunningham (Dem)



Age: 67

Location: Missoula

Education: Graduate-Medical School

Occupation: Physician Ombuds and Legislator

Contact information:

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melodyformontana@gmail.

com, 406-493-7279

1. This is a challenging one to answer since I recently visited Memphis, TN to learn from a place that has multiple Data Centers already. They have had regulations and agreements with the companies that are then broken. The residents impacted have little recourse since the enforcement of these is weak at best. Also, these are often placed in impoverished neighborhoods where the bandwidth for the residents to fight is limited. Hard to fight big corporations with significant finances when struggling to put food on the table and gas in the car are primary concerns. Short list of regulations: Self-sustaining energy production, air quality monitoring, water reclamation and quality monitoring, noise ordinances, pay property taxes, and for the technical equipment that outdates rapidly to ensure that taxes are paid on that equipment. Jobs given to local citizens and union members, health insurance provided. Given what I have learned, enforcement of regulations is paramount!

2. 1. Fund the bipartisan passed 3% provider rate increase. This will help rural hospitals and clinics remain open. 2. Reverse HB 337 (2025), that gives the top 1% of earners approximately \$6,000 annual tax relief and \$161 annual tax relief to median income. This costs the state revenue, \$1.1 Billion every two years. 3. Reverse the decision to start every 6-month redetermination early. Federally, it is

mandated to start in January of 2027. Montana decided to start it in July of 2026. 4. FIX the portal for eligible Montanans to input their work requirements and other mandated data into the DPHHS system. CMS requires 45-day window for application processing. Montana is dead last in the country with nearly 40% of the applications taking longer than 45 days! 5. Fix the disenrollment of Montana children. This time, Montana is at the top of the list! Nearly 35% of our children have lost healthcare coverage since 2023. The national average is 18% loss of coverage.

3. No, I definitely do not support a flat income tax! This would not benefit those who are already taxed at 4.7% and are most in need of relief in order to put food on the table, fill the gas tank in order to get to work or harvest their fields and feed their livestock. It will further diminish the state coffers, The General Fund, and thus cause cuts to important services: Infrastructure for roads and bridges, healthcare, education to name just a few.

4. The picture painted for the public is that there is much inter- and intra-party fighting. Many are surprised to learn that much of what we vote on, have our values aligned and are actually non-partisan. For those issues that are more partisan, there are continual discussions across the aisle and within each side of that aisle. Personally, I discuss ALL issues, contentious and easy, with other legislators. If we only discuss issues with those who are likely to agree with us or that are not lightening rods, then we will not make the best policy or laws. The way that I best frame this for myself and my constituents is, "Collaborative Conversations for Sensible, Shared Solutions!" And...yes, I am a fan of alliteration!

5. Yes, we do. This is one of those issues that I would say is non-partisan. Every candidate or legislator heard from their constituents that property taxes are too high. With much discussion, debate and compromise, legislation was passed. Property taxes are still too high and is preventing young folks from being able to afford to purchase a home and build equity, while taxing many seniors out of the homes that they have owned for decades.

6. 1. Apply regulations to cryptocurrency kiosks. This could include requirements for transaction caps, escrow holds, or mandatory dispute/refund windows. This would help to eliminate the immediate finality of transactions which will often drain funds and make them unable to be recovered. 2. Like AZ and NB, we could require blockchain analytics and fraud-warning disclosures at physical crypto kiosks. 3. Ban or restrict digital asset kiosks. This has been done in cities in WA and MN. 4. Media campaigns to warn of scams, especially those that target seniors. AARP has important information to direct our senior constituents to read.



Michael Hagestad (Rep)



Age: 27

Location: Missoula

Education: J.D. at UM Law,
Bachelor Economics at
Hillsdale College

Occupation: Attorney

Contact

information: [https://
hagestadformontana.com/](https://hagestadformontana.com/),
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1. The adequate balance should be set where community concerns are compensated out of the excess value created by data centers. The argument boils down to community worries about negative externalities (environment, water, noise, power usage). This can be addressed by having the data-center-proposer offer compensation to the community sufficiently to match the negative externalities. A Pigouvian tax, at a minimum, would be sufficient.

2. Healthcare is expensive because it is subsidized. If you have the subsidies then you don't feel the higher price, but if you don't have access to the subsidies (income too high, under-employment), then you feel the higher price without any help. This creates a benefits cliff (improving personal income can result in loss to total consumption through loss of benefits). Healthcare would be more accessible if either (1) it was uniformly subsidized or (2) the subsidies were removed. A more short-term fix could come from trying to simplify regulations to lower compliance costs.

3. I agree with a flat income tax. It should just be set at a rate that pays for the services that Montanans consume. If Montanans want to pay more taxes to consume more services, that is fine. If they want to pay less taxes and consume less services, that is also fine. The first priority is fiscal responsibility.

4. Bipartisanship should only play a role insofar as the individual members agree on certain policies and seek to pursue them together. Bipartisanship is not a good in itself, it is only good insofar as it helps to achieve other, higher, goods.

5. Yes. I think it further complicates the tax system with no discernible benefits to the taxpayers at large, or to the state. A more complicated tax system increases friction from compliance costs and creates deadweight loss. A simple tax system is a more efficient tax system and allows communities to build lasting wealth rather than burning it on friction.

6. Investigating frauds and scams and bringing the hammer down on people who prey on the credulous. While I believe immigration also plays a role in this, at this point that opinion is little more than speculation.



HOUSE DISTRICT 98

Note: Candidate for HD 98, Bryan Muzzana (Rep) did not participate in this questionnaire.

Jonathan Karlen (Dem)



Age: 27

Location: Missoula

Education: B.S. in Wildlife
Biology, with a minor in
Climate Change Studies,
from UM; Master of Public
Administration from UM
Occupation: Legal clerk,
while pursuing J.D. at UM

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org](http://jonathankarlen.org)

1. I share the serious concerns that I've heard from constituents regarding the impacts that data centers can have on our state. Some of the most significant include effects on neighboring residents, the loss of open space, excessive water use, higher utility rates, and setbacks to progress on reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Montanans should never be left subsidizing data centers, and the state should enact stringent regulations to ensure that no data center is developed without fully addressing its environmental and consumer impacts, as well as ensuring that local residents are protected. Further, communities where data centers are proposed should be at the forefront of determining whether, where, and under what conditions data centers are developed.

2. Over the past year, my constituents have had to contend with sharp increases in healthcare costs and added bureaucracy to maintain Medicaid coverage, among other challenges. The result is that more people face a financial catastrophe if they are in an accident or get sick, and many are forced to defer preventive care which keeps them healthy and reduces healthcare costs for everyone. Employers are also facing rising costs in providing coverage for their employees. At the state level, we should focus on ensuring that Medicaid-eligible Montanans remain covered and that provider reimbursement rates keep pace with rising costs so that we don't lose providers in our communities. We also need to bolster coverage for children with complex medical needs. Last session I was grateful to work with healthcare providers on legislation to reduce insurance-imposed barriers to care, and I want to continue building on that work in 2027 by advancing pro-consumer healthcare legislation.

3. I don't support Governor Gianforte's flat tax proposal for several reasons, but these are the two most troubling aspects of his plan to me: First, I don't believe it is fiscally responsible. The proposal is estimated to

reduce state revenue by roughly \$120 million over the next two years, and given uncertainty in the U.S. economy and state revenue projections for the next several years, I believe the governor's plan could put Montana at real risk of a fiscal crisis that results in cuts to schools, social services, and infrastructure. Second, it would not meaningfully help the vast majority of my constituents because the largest share of the tax benefits will go to the highest earners. A recent analysis showed that the wealthiest 20% of households would receive about 95% of the tax reductions. My hope is build consensus on continuing to reduce property taxes and lowering the costs of childcare, healthcare, and housing.

4. My sole focus in the Legislature is on serving my constituents. To do that, I need to work with members of both parties, both as a practical matter to pass legislation and because the end result is stronger when we consider multiple perspectives. I have had occasional disagreements with members of my own party, but I believe a diversity of perspectives in both parties is healthy and should be encouraged. I'm grateful that Democrats and Republicans in the Montana Legislature generally have strong working relationships and have been able to get important work done together. As I did last session, in 2027 I plan to work across the aisle on issues including education, healthcare, property taxes, housing, and childcare, among others. I believe that legislators should strive for civility in our debates and make good-faith efforts to build consensus.

5. The bipartisan property tax legislation last session was an important step in reducing property taxes and minimizing further tax increases in areas with rapidly increasing property values. I strongly support maintaining the tiered rate structure that we put in place because this structure better targets relief toward middle-class families and primary residences. However, like any law, it is not perfect, and we should continuously work to make improvements based on feedback from constituents. I believe we should expand the Elderly Homeowner and Renter Credit and the Property Tax Assistance Program to provide additional relief to seniors whose incomes are not keeping up with rising costs and to renters who pay property taxes indirectly through their rent. I'm also interested in reviewing ways to minimize the tax increases that some long-time family cabins saw.

6. Between the proliferation of AI-generated misinformation and the creativity of fraudsters, scams are becoming increasingly sophisticated and harmful. We should ensure that the state has the resources and authority it needs to investigate scams and hold perpetrators accountable. I also believe Montana should consider laws other states have adopted to protect against cryptocurrency-related fraud. Preventively, the state should invest

in resources to educate youth and vulnerable populations about emerging scams.



HOUSE DISTRICT 99

Note: Candidate for HD 99, Ryan Darling (Rep) did not participate in this questionnaire.

Tom France (Dem)



Age: 75

Location: Missoula

Education: I have a bachelor's degree and a law degree from the University of Montana

Occupation: Montana State Representative, House District 99

Contact information: Facebook: Tom France for HD 99, thomasmfrance@gmail.com, 406-396-5085

1. Right now, Montana has no oversight of data centers, and we need legislation establishing clear siting act requirements. Montanans need to be protected from electricity rate increase brought on by data centers, existing water uses must be safeguarded and coordination with local governments must be required to minimize construction and community impacts. I plan to introduce a data center siting act to establish appropriate oversight and standards for these projects. In the absence of sitting act legislation, Montana needs a data center moratorium until we have adequate oversight laws in place.

2. Governor Gianforte has rescinded a 3 percent increase in the payment rates to medical providers that was approved by the 2025 Legislature. The Governor justified the reduction by citing budgetary concerns, while also proposing cut taxes for the wealthiest Montanans. The reduction in provider rates will exacerbate reductions to the Affordable Care Act made by the Republican controlled Congress. The combination of these changes will hurt our hospitals and medical providers and on the patients that depend on them, with the most severe impacts occurring in rural Montana. In the 2027 Legislature, I will once again work to increase provider reimbursement rates and strengthen access to quality healthcare for all Montanans.

3. I strongly oppose Governor Gianforte's proposed flat income tax. Montana has had a progressive income tax since 1933, with higher rates applying to higher levels of income. A progressive income tax allows working and middle-income Montanans to retain ore of their income to meet every day needs, while Montanans with greater disposable income pay slightly higher income tax rates. Under Gianforte's plan, the wealthiest Montanans will get an \$8,700 tax cut while taxpayers making

less than \$90,000 will get no tax cut at all. I believe Montana should maintain a tax system that recognizes differences in taxpayers' ability to pay and I will oppose Gianforte's efforts to replace Montana's graduated income tax with a flat tax.

4. The 2025 Legislative session saw a great deal of bipartisan work between moderate Republicans and Democrats. This work resulted in a substantial reduction in residential property taxes, Medicaid reauthorization, the creation of a new state trust that will benefit Montanans in the future, and the defeat of bills to make our non-partisan judges to run on political party tickets. Following the session, rightwing political action committees spent millions trying to defeat Republican legislators in the 2026 primary for working with Democrats. I am hopeful that that the 2027 Legislature will once again see Republicans and Democrats work together through bipartisan cooperation and negotiation to address the challenges facing Montana.

5. The 2025 Legislature passed legislation that reduced property taxes on primary residences for approximately 80 percent of Montana homeowners. I know the Legislature will again consider ways to reduce property taxes for Montana homeowners, and I will support reducing property taxes on legacy cabins and second homes that many Montana families have owned for generations.

6. The Montana State Auditor, who also serves as the Commissioner of Securities and Insurance, is responsible for protecting Montanans from insurance fraud and providing consumer protection. The 2025 Legislature passed two bills strengthening cryptocurrency protections, but we remain the only state without a licensing requirement for crypto businesses. I will work in the 2027 Legislature close this regulatory gap, strengthen consumer protections and ensure that Montanans have meaningful protections against cryptocurrency fraud and scams.



HOUSE DISTRICT 100

Note: Two candidates for HD 100, Michael Daniel Bowles (Rep) and JC Windmueller (Lib) did not participate in this questionnaire.

SJ Howell (Dem)

Age: 46

Location: Missoula

Education: BA from University of Montana

Occupation: Nonprofit director

Contact information: sjhowell4mt@gmail.com, howellformt.com



1. Whatever regulations are created around

data center development need to be focused first and foremost on protecting Montanans. We need to ensure that Montanans aren't paying higher electricity bills due to data center energy demands. We need to protect water rights and our constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment. We need to ensure that local communities have meaningful opportunities for public input and local control, and we need to ensure that if new data centers are built, they are paying their fair share in taxes.

2. We can improve access to Medicaid in Montana by cutting red tape, eliminating bureaucracy, and improving enrollment systems. Montana currently has some of the lowest scores in the nation for efficiency and customer service in our Medicaid program, and we must do better. We can also ensure that costs come down for everyone by investing in primary care services, joining other states in bargaining for lower prescription drug prices, and making sure mental and behavioral health care isn't ignored. We need to ensure we're investing in families and communities, not consultants and out-of-state corporations.

3. I absolutely do not support a flat income tax. Recent nonpartisan analysis shows that the Governor's proposed tax cut is simply another tax giveaway to the very wealthy - and indeed, that 99% of middle-class Montanans will not see a single penny from this proposal. Meanwhile, our state's ability to educate our kids, fix our roads and bridges, and protect our public lands are at stake as we lose millions of dollars a year in revenue.

4. I believe that bipartisanship is a basic Montana value. When we work together, we create solutions that work best for Montanans. It's as simple as that. Let's put divisive politics aside and do the work that voters elected us to do.

5. I think we can always improve on any policy solution, and it's useful to revisit big policy changes after some time to see what might need to be fixed. That said, I believe the basic framework of the property tax package is solid. Most Montana homeowners saw a tax decrease, without local cuts to schools or public services, and we should continue to ensure we're creating a progressive and fair property tax system.

6. More public education, information on current scams, and a helpline for anyone faced with a potential scam are important steps we can take to better protect Montanans.



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