

MEMO

To: Interested Parties
From: Montana Conservation Voters Date: March 18, 2024
Re: Montana Conservation Voters 2024 Candidate Endorsement Process

ABOUT

Montana Conservation Voters and its affiliated state political action committee, the MCV Action Fund, protect our clean air, clean water, public lands, and democracy supporting leaders that fight for these rights and holding accountable those who do not.

BACKGROUND AND PROCESS

MCV has a record of supporting pro-conservation candidates for 25 years. We have elected conservation leaders to all levels of government from city councils to the U.S. Senate and everything in between. MCV seeks to support candidates who share our commitment to conservation and democracy and demonstrate a commitment to running a competitive campaign.

To become an MCV endorsed candidate, interested parties must complete a questionnaire for the office they are seeking that will ask the candidate's stance on a range of issues that MCV cares about. The questionnaires can be found on our website [HERE](#). Because MCV will be endorsing candidates in various races, it is essential to confirm that the appropriate questionnaire is filled out. After returning a completed candidate questionnaire, staff will reach out to set up an endorsement interview with a panel including MCV members and staff. The endorsement panel will then make a recommendation to the MCV Action Fund board, who will then make the final decision.

To expedite the process, when only one candidate returns the questionnaire in a race, MCV may opt to skip the endorsement interview if the candidate's questionnaire answers are sufficient. Candidates who have been previously endorsed by MCV for the same office do not need to complete a questionnaire, but they do need to confirm that they would like MCV's endorsement.

All endorsement decisions are ultimately up to the MCV Action Fund board.

Once a decision has been made, MCV staff will communicate to candidates whether they receive an endorsement or not.

ENDORSEMENT ROLLOUTS

When MCV endorses a candidate, it is our responsibility to inform our membership that we have officially put our support behind the candidate because of their public commitment to conservation and democracy. Communicating to our members about our endorsements is a permissible 501c4 activity.

Member communications may include:

- Press releases
 - Press releases will be sent out as soon as endorsements are finalized. Press releases may include quotes from the candidates being announced and should be sent to all media contacts in the respective communities.
- Emails to MCV's members

- Emails regarding endorsements are sent to MCV's membership after all endorsements are made and later on in the election cycle in October. These emails may incorporate all endorsed candidates running statewide and the endorsed candidates for a community. For example, the Billings membership email will include all statewide candidate endorsements as well as endorsements for legislative candidates running in Billings. These emails will also include donation links to the MCV Action Fund to support our independent expenditure work on behalf of our candidates.
- Social media posts
 - MCV will strive to do at least one social media post for every endorsed candidate before October. One post per candidate enables each candidate to easily share a unique post on their endorsement on their social media channels. MCV will also tag the endorsed candidates' social media to ensure they see and can re-post the communication. Social media platforms used include Facebook and Instagram and sometimes Twitter.
 - MCV may also post to social media to announce endorsements.
- Including our endorsements in our monthly newsletter
 - MCV will mail a hard copy of our voter guide in October to our members across the state that will list our endorsements. This requires separating the mailers by region so we only include the relevant endorsements for each community. We will also send our voter guide via email and follow the same practice.
- Listing candidates on our endorsements page
 - All MCV endorsed candidates will be featured on MCV's [endorsement page](#). Included on the website is a bio for each candidate as well as a link to their campaign website and/or Facebook page. The MCV website will be updated as soon as endorsements are finalized.

MCV strives to do as much member communication about our endorsements as possible, given our resources and without jeopardizing our primary purpose. All member communications should be done in partnership with MCV's Program Director.

INDEPENDENT EXPENDITURES AND CANDIDATE SUPPORT

The MCV Action Fund is the primary vehicle in which MCV can support endorsed candidates. The MCV Action Fund mainly conducts independent expenditure campaigns but can also support candidates with direct contributions or candidate support. Independent expenditure work is firewalled off from candidates and campaigns, while candidate support can be done on the "coordinated" side of the firewall as long as it doesn't exceed the maximum contribution [allowable by Montana state law](#).

Independent expenditures can include:

- Direct mail to voters
- Canvassing
- Calls, or texts to voters
- Paid digital ads

Candidate support can include:

- Providing endorsement logos, talking points, polling or other resource information

- Recruiting earned media
- Recruiting volunteers for campaigns
- Helping turnout MCV members to candidate events
- Hosting or supporting events
- Hosting social media Q and As

All MCV Action Fund work will be reported to the Commissioner of Political Practice and will be done in close consultation with the MCV Action Fund compliance team.

ENDORSEMENT TIMELINE.

- 3/18 - Endorsement process is announced
 - On a rolling basis, begin endorsements for incumbent, previously endorsed MCV candidates and begin endorsements for non-competitive races with pro-conservation candidates
- **4/23 - MCV candidate endorsement application deadline**
4/23- Begin endorsement interviews for competitive primary races with no MCV endorsed incumbent
- **5/17- All primary endorsements announced**
- 6/10-7/12- Begin post-primary endorsement interviews
- **8/1- All general election endorsements announced**

IMPORTANT DATES

- 1/11 - Candidate filing opens
- 3/11-Candidate filling closes
- **6/4 - Primary Election**
- **11/5 - General Election**