

Montana's future is on the ballot

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Editor's note: Whitney Tawney is the Executive Director of Montana Conservation Voters and a resident of Bozeman. You can find all of MCV's 2024 endorsed candidates at mtvoters.org/endorsements

Every election year, we hear the familiar refrain: "This is the most critical election cycle ever." In 2024, this statement couldn't be more accurate. The stakes this year aren't just high – they're monumental.

Democracy requires constant vigilance. It's our responsibility to defend our rights: the right to clean air, clean water and healthy public lands, and the very essence of Montana's future.

This year, we face unprecedented challenges. Powerful special interests are determined to erode our access to public lands, a cornerstone of Montana's identity. It's up to us to resist this attack and protect what makes Montana unique.

In November, we must turn out in force to elect leaders who will safeguard the values we hold dear. This election isn't just about choosing representatives, it's about protecting the Montana we know and love.

At the federal level, we have the chance to keep a pro-Montana, pro-conservation U.S. Senator in office and to elect an energy freedom champion who will fight hard for Montana values to represent the western Congressional District. In the Governor's office, we need a leader with a clear vision to protect Montana's outdoor legacy. We must also ensure our Supreme Court remains nonpartisan, and we have the opportunity to break an anti-conservation supermajority in the state Legislature.

Since 2007, Sen. Jon Tester has been a steadfast advocate for Montana in the U.S. Senate. His dedication to protecting our outdoor way of life is unparalleled. In 2019, his bill to permanently reauthorize the Land and Water Conservation Fund passed and became law, which has channeled over \$26 million into Gallatin County's outdoor economy. Sen. Tester's Yellowstone Gateway Protection Act successfully banned new mining claims on 30,000 acres of public land east of Bozeman. His bipartisan Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act secured \$3.37 billion for wildfire mitigation. Sen. Tester has consistently proven he's the right choice to ensure Montana's future.

Monica Tranel, running for the western Congressional District, has proven time and again that she has the best interests of Montanans in mind, and her extensive background fighting for Montana ratepayers shows that she is the best candidate to further Montana's access to renewable energy and lower energy costs.

For Governor, Ryan Busse is the commonsense choice. He's committed to opposing any increase in property taxes, rejecting a statewide sales tax, and enhancing our corner crossing rights while fearlessly defending access to our public lands and waters.

In the Supreme Court, Judges Jerry Lynch and Katherine Bidegeraray stand out as defenders of our Constitution and the strong laws protecting public lands. With decades of legal experience, they are well-equipped to protect Montana for years to come as fair and balanced stewards.

In the state Legislature, reelecting experienced leaders from Bozeman like Sen. Chris Pope, Rep. Kelly Kortum, Rep. Eric Matthews and Rep. Ed Stafman is crucial. But we also need the fresh perspectives and energy of newcomers like Carl Anderson, Brian Close, Becky Edwards, Alanah Giffith, Cora Neumann, Scott Rosenzweig, Josh Seckinger, and Peter Strand to challenge powerful interests and fight for the Montana we cherish.

Montana's future is on the ballot. And the decisions we make as voters will impact our children, their children, and generations to come. That's why I am proud of the work Montana Conservation Voters is doing to ensure voters can make informed choices about which candidates truly prioritize conservation.

As November 5 approaches, remember that every vote counts. This election is about protecting Montana as the Last Best Place. Vote for the candidates who will stand up for our public lands and our children's future. Montana deserves leaders who will protect the place we are lucky to call home and it's up to us to put them there.